







# Lycidas, Sonnets

John Milton

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THIS selection comprises, with only one notable exception (*Comus*\*), all the English poetry that Milton wrote between 1630 and 1660—a period of thirty years. On the former date he had already been five years at the University of Cambridge, and on the latter he finally escaped from the political troubles that had beset him for nearly twenty years and set to work in earnest upon his great epic, *Paradise Lost*. If we divide his life into four periods, as detailed below, we find that the poems in this volume belong to the second and third of these, and, if we exclude the Sonnets, entirely to the second. We have to deal, therefore, with the products of Milton's earlier muse, his later or epic muse belongs exclusively to the fourth and last period of his life.

I Pre-literary period, 1608-25

II Period of College and Country life and Travel,  
1625-40

III Controversial period, 1640-60

IV Period of Great Poems, 1660-74

I John Milton was born on December 9th, 1608, about eight years before the death of Shakespeare. His father, a prosperous London scrivener, was a pious and cultured man, and chose as his son's first tutor Thomas Young, a Puritan divine. In his twelfth year

\* A separate volume of this series



the boy was entered as a day scholar at St Paul's School, and there he attended for four or five years. Before he left this school he had made good progress in Greek and Latin, he knew some Hebrew, and he had also, by his father's advice, studied French and Italian. His own account of these laborious pre college days is as follows: "My father destined me while yet a little boy for the study of humane letters, which I seized with such eagerness, that from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight, which indeed was the first cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches. All which not retarding my impetuosity in learning, he caused me to be daily instructed, both at the grammar-school and under other masters at home, and then when I had acquired various tongues, and also not some insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy, he sent me to Cambridge." He had already shown some facility in the writing of verses, but only two paraphrases of psalms have been preserved to us.

II In February, 1625—six weeks before the accession of Charles I, Milton was enrolled at Christ's College, Cambridge, and for seven years he continued to study there. He took the B A degree in 1628-9, and the M A degree in July, 1632. During these years he wrote a number of Latin pieces and the following English poems—*On the Death of a Fair Infant* (1626)—his first original poem in his native tongue, *At a Vacation Exercise* (1628), *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629), an unfinished piece on *The Passion*, also the five short poems that stand at the beginning of this volume, and the first and second sonnets. In the *Song on May*

*Morning* we have a foretaste of the spirit of *L'Allegro*, both in the matter and the rhythm, in the lines *On Shakespeare* we already discover some of the most striking characteristics of Milton's style, in the two poems *On the University Carrier* the poet shows a kind of whimsical pleasantry that does not appear again anywhere in his poems, and in the graceful *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester* we have much of the exquisite perfection of language and metric seen in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, along with a glimpse of the elegiac beauty and religious feeling of *Lycidas*. The small piece *On Time* is variously referred to the period of Milton's life at Cambridge and to the Horton period, similarly with *At a Solemn Music* and *Upon the Circumcision*. The second sonnet closes the list of his compositions at Cambridge. He had already found his true vocation—poetry, and, in obedience to “an inward prompting” to fit himself by labour and intent study for his life work, he gave up all intention of studying for the Church, left the university after obtaining his degree and retired at the age of twenty-three to his father's house in the small village of Horton, near Windsor, and about twenty miles from London.

(To the six quiet years of country life at Horton—years which Milton regarded merely as a time of “ripening” for his great work, we owe the best of his minor poems, written in the order in which they are here named, viz *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. It has been said that these pieces, even though their author had not written *Paradise Lost*, “would have sufficed to place their author in a class apart, and above all those who had used the English language for poetical purposes before him”

Yet Milton himself regarded them as no more than the first fruits of his genius, he had, in his own estimation, shattered the leaves of his poetic laurels "before the mellowing year." In April, 1638, he set out on a journey to Italy, the classic land of poetry and art. He had spent some months in Florence and Rome, and was staying in Naples when "the sad news of civil war" reached him, he resolved to turn his face homewards, "for," he says, "I thought it disgraceful, while my fellow-countrymen were fighting for liberty, that I should be travelling abroad for pleasure." He retraced his steps in a leisurely manner, and arrived in England in August, 1639. It was on this journey that he wrote his Italian Sonnets, and shortly after his return he wrote that elegy on the death of his friend Charles Diodati, to which allusion is made in the notes on *Lycidas*.

III In the end of 1639 Milton took lodgings in London, and hoped to betake himself to his favourite studies with a view to still further maturing himself for the production of some great English poem. But this hope was not fulfilled. The Scots had rebelled against Episcopacy, and the Puritans of England (of whom, both by nature and upbringing, Milton was one) were all in sympathy with them. The famous Long Parliament had already resisted in a number of ways the unconstitutional conduct of Charles I, and had decided to sweep away the abuses of the Episcopal Church. How best to do this was the important question, and to the answering of this Milton first devoted himself with all the enthusiasm of his truly religious spirit.

Then, in 1642, civil war broke out, and Milton, of course, declared for the side of the Parliament. In

1643, he nevertheless married a lady belonging to a Royalist family, who left him after less than two months and did not return for two years. This turned his attention to the question of divorce, and the new controversy between the Presbyterians and the Independents provided still more work for his pen. Throughout all the din and smoke of war we catch only a few glimpses of the poet, as distinct from the pamphleteer. How few these glimpses are the sonnets composed in these years will show. From 1640 to 1648, when the last embers of the civil war were finally extinguished, Milton wrote nothing in poetry but nine sonnets (VIII-XV) and a few Latin pieces. And in the next ten years, when he was in the employment of the new government, and when upon him was thrown the task of answering all attacks made upon it, he wrote, along with much prose, nothing more than his eight remaining sonnets (XVI-XXIII) and a few scraps in Latin. In 1658, when he wrote his last sonnet, Cromwell died. Milton continued in office as Latin Secretary, and within a few weeks of the Restoration we find him issuing projects for the best means of establishing a free commonwealth. He had been blind since 1652, in 1653-4 his first wife died, and in 1656 he married again, but his second wife died fifteen months after the marriage, in 1664 he married a third time.

IV At the Restoration, Milton was placed for a short time under arrest, but he was at last able to take up the task that had been laid aside so long, and in 1665 the composition of *Paradise Lost* was completed. It was followed in 1671 by *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In 1674 the poet died.

We shall sum up in a few words the most striking characteristics of Milton's genius

1 First of all we may note his early and settled conviction that poetry was his vocation. He tells us, before he is twenty-three years of age, that he has discovered "whether aught was imposed upon me by them that had the overlooking or betaken to of mine own choice, in English or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live" In 1637, just before he wrote *Lycidas*, he felt that God had installed into him a vehement love of the beautiful, and declared that he was "wont day and night to seek for this idea of the beautiful through all the forms and faces of things

You ask what I am thinking of? So may the good Deity help me, of immortality"—*Letter to Diodati*

2 Along with this we note his sense of the greatness of the poet's task, and his consequent self-appreciation, which, however, was very different from the sickly self-conceit of that race of poets who immediately preceded him, and of that equally complacent race who came after him. "His ideal was too high to enable him to be other than truly modest." He looked for inspiration to "that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases"—*Reason of Church Government* (1641)

3 His rule of life was therefore a strict one—the inward ripeness that he desired could only be attained in one way—by the noblest purity in every thought and action. "Long it was not after when I was confirmed

in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem—that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things"—*Apology for Needyumture*. "As a part of his noble austerity of life we may specially note his strictly temperate habits." In his sixth elegy he tells us that they who would hope to sing of heroes and to explore the counsels of Heaven must live simply :

Let herbs to them a bloodless banquet give,  
In beechen goblets let their beverage shine,  
Goad' from the crystal spring, their solar wine !

(Cowper's translation.)

The same sentiment shows itself in the delineation of *Peperassa*, one of whose companions is "spare Fast", in *Lucida* (line 72), and in Sonnet XX. For the poet is sacred and must draw his inspiration from Heaven, not from the wine-cup.

4 He was a man of industrious and select reading. His knowledge was most extensive. "Whatever," says Prof. Mason, "of learning, of science, or of discipline in logic or philosophy, the University at that time could give, he had duly and in the largest measure acquired." No better Greek or Latin scholar probably had the University in that age sent forth; he was proficient in the Hebrew tongue, and in all the other customary aids to a Biblical Theology, and he could speak and write well in French and Italian. His acquaintance, obtained by independent reading, with the history and with the whole body of the literature of ancient and modern nations, was extensive and various"—*Three Devils, &c*. When he left the University and went to Horton, he

devoted himself to a steady perusal of the Greek and Latin writers, and was eager to learn "anything new in Mathematics or in Music" And just before he was whirled into the controversies of Church and State he was still looking forward to a time of hard study

5 His religious fervour was as much a part of himself as his poetic temperament Hence, in the controversial war in which he engaged, he believed his task to have been imposed upon him by Heaven in no less degree than that other task of writing a great poem And hence, also, it was as natural for Milton to introduce deep thoughts of death and immortality into a few lines written to set on a clock-case, or to compare the Marchioness of Winchester with Rachel, or to speak of Lycidas in the same breath as a risen saint and the "genius of the shore," as it was for him to write of the great truths of Scripture in *Paradise Lost* His grand seriousness is over all

6 His love of music is an important element of his genius His father was no mean musician, and both father and son numbered famous musicians among their friends "As nature had endowed him in no ordinary degree with that most exquisite of her gifts, the ear and the passion for harmony, he had studied music as an art, and had taught himself not only to sing in the society of others, but also to touch the keys for his solitary pleasure" (Masson, *Three Devils*, etc) His style is everywhere dominated by his mastery over the effects of music, and his works are full of expressions of his love for it It influences his choice of words, his choice of a particular form of a word, and even his pronunciation, it explains many of those inversions so common in his

poetry, it accounts for his use of alliteration and for the form of many of the compound epithets that he coined so freely; it heightens the charm of his songs, and, above all, it has enabled him once for all to stamp the character of English blank verse.

\* 7. Bound up with the preceding is his laborious striving after perfection of workmanship.\* We shall close with the words of Mr Matthew Arnold on this point: "It to our English race an inadequate sense for perfection of work is a real danger, if the discipline of respect for a high and flawless excellence is peculiarly needed by us, Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence." In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique amongst us. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction"—*Essays in Criticism*, 2nd series





MILTON'S

L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO, ARCADES,  
LYCIDAS, SONNETS, ETC

SONG ON MAY MORNING

Now the bright morning-star, Day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her  
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire

Mirth, and youth, and warm desire!

Woods and groves are of thy dressing,

Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing

Thus we salute thee with our early song,

And welcome thee, and wish thee long

10

ON SHAKESPEARE 1630

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones  
The labour of an age in pil'd stones?

O! that his hallowed reliques should be hid

Under a star-pointing pyramid?

Deu son of memory, great hen of fame,

What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?

Thou in our wonder and astonishment

Hast built thyself a living monument

For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart 10  
 Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,  
 Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,  
 Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,  
 And so sepulchred in such pomp dost he  
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die

### ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

*Who sickened in the time of his Vacancy, being forbid to go to  
 London by reason of the Plague*

HERE<sup>✓</sup> lies old Hobson Death hath broke his girt,  
 And here, alas' hath laid him in the dirt,  
 O, else, the ways being foul, twenty to one  
 He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown  
 'Twas such a shifter that, if truth were known,  
 Death was half glad when he had got him down,  
 For he had any time this ten years full  
 Dodged with him betwixt Cambridge and *The Bull* .  
 And surely Death could never have prevailed,  
 Had not his weekly course of carriage failed, 10  
 But lately, finding him so long at home,  
 And thinking now his journey's end was come,  
 And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,  
 In the kind office of a chamberlin  
 Showed him his room where he must lodge that night,  
 Pulled off his boots, and took away the light  
 If any ask for him, it shall be said,  
 "Hobson has supped, and's newly gone to bed"

## ANOTHER ON THE SAME

First both one who did and truly prove  
 That he could never die while he could move,  
 So hung his destiny never to rot  
 While he might still go on and keep his lot,  
 Made of splen'nd metal never to decay  
 Until his revolution came at day  
 True number lost in yet (without a crime  
 'Gainst old truth) motion number'd out his time,  
 And, like an engine moved with wheel and weight,  
 His principle being rev'd, he ended straight 10  
 Best, that gives all run life, gave him his death,  
 And too much by atone put him out of breath,  
 Nor was it contradiction to affirm  
 Too long creation hatched on his term  
 Merely to drive the time away he suck'd,  
 Fainted, and died not would with all be quench'd  
 "Nay," quoth he, calm in swooning bed outstretch'd,  
 "If I cannot cry, sure I'll ne'er be fetch'd,  
 But now, though the crowd doctors all stood hearers,  
 For one carrier put down to make six bearers' 20  
 Lose was his chief disease, and, to judge right,  
 He died for heaven that his out went light  
 His leisure told him that his time was come,  
 And lack of love made his life burdensome,  
 That even to his last breath (there be that w't),  
 As he were press'd to death, he cried, "More weight!"  
 But, had his doings listed as they were,  
 He had been an immortal carrier  
 Obedient to the moon he spent his date  
 In course reciprocal, and had his fate 30  
 Linked to the mutual flowing of the seas,  
 Yet (strange to think) his wain was his increase  
 His letters are delivered all and gone,  
 Only remains this superscription

AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF  
WINCHESTER

THIS rich marble doth inter  
 The honoured wife of Winchester,  
 A Viscount's daughter, an Earl's hen,  
 Besides what her virtues fair  
 Added to her noble birth,  
 More than she could own from Earth  
 Summers three times eight save one  
 She had told, alas! too soon,  
 After so short time of breath,  
 To house with darkness and with death! 10  
 Yet, had the number of her days  
 Been as complete as was her praise,  
 Nature and Fate had had no strife  
 In giving limit to her life  
 Her high birth and her graces sweet  
 Quickly found a lover meet,  
 The virgin quire for her request  
 The god that sits at marriage-feast,  
 He at then invoking came,  
 But with a scarce well-lighted flame, 20  
 And in his garland, as he stood,  
 Ye might discern a cypress-bud  
 Once had the early matrons run  
 To greet her of a lovely son,  
 And now with second hope she goes,  
 And calls Lucina to her throes,  
 But, whether by mischance or blame,  
 Atropos for Lucina came,  
 And with remorseless cruelty  
 Spoiled at once both fruit and tree 30  
 The hapless babe before his birth  
 Had burial, not yet laid in earth,  
 And the languished mother's womb

Was not long a living tomb  
 So late I saw her tender ship,  
 Saved with care from winter's rap,  
 The pride of her examination train,  
 Picked up by some noble I swim,  
 With only that in to top the flower  
 Now shot up from vernal shower  
 But the far hills are lungs the heart  
 Solemn as a mountain of red lead,  
 And the depth of dew she wears  
 Pressed to be precious tears  
 Whilst the red moon had let fall  
 On her last an'g funeral  
 To all Lady, was the grave  
 Peace and quiet to her leave  
 After this thy travail on,  
 Sweet is to see the coronation,  
 That, to give the world her law,  
 Startedst last thy own life law!  
 Here, be both the crowning  
 Thy noble house doth bring,  
 Here be tears of perfect moon  
 Wept for thee in Helicon  
 And some flowers need some leaves  
 For thy last, to strew the way,  
 Sent thee from the banks of Came,  
 Devoted to thy virtuous name,  
 Whilst thou, bright Saint, high sittest in glory,  
 Next her, much like to thee in story,  
 That fair Syrian shepherless,  
 Who, after years of barrenness,  
 The highly-favoured Joseph bore  
 To him that served for her before,  
 And at her next birth, much like thee,  
 Through pangs fled to felicity,  
 Far within the bosom bright

Of blazing Majesty and Light  
 There with thee, new-welcome Saint,  
 Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,  
 With thee there clad in radiant sheen,  
 No Marchioness, but now a Queen.

70

## ON TIME

FLY, envious Time, till thou run out thy race  
 Call on the lazy leaden-stepping Hours,  
 Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace,  
 And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,  
 Which is no more than what is false and vain,  
 And merely mortal dross,  
 So little is our loss,  
 So little is thy gain  
 For, when as each thing bad thou hast entombed,  
 And, last of all, thy greedy self consumed,  
 Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss  
 With an individual kiss,  
 And Joy shall overtake us as a flood,  
 When every thing that is sincerely good  
 And perfectly divine,  
 With Truth, and Peace, and Love, shall ever shine  
 About the supreme throne  
 Of Him, to whose happy-making sight alone  
 When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,  
 Then, all this earthly grossness quit,  
 Attired with stars we shall for ever sit,  
 Triumphant over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time !

10

20

L'ALLEGRO

Hence, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn *desolate*

'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy  
Find out some uncouth cell, *unknown* *horrible* *abode*  
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings, *see*  
And the night raven sings; *perme*  
There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks, *over*  
As ragged as thy locks,

In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell 10  
But come, thou Godless fun and free,  
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
And by men heart-easing Mirth,  
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,  
With two sister Graces more,  
To ivy-crown'd Bacchus bore  
Or whether (as some sager sing)  
The frolic wind that breathes the spring  
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,  
As he met her once a-Maying,  
There, on beds of violets blue,  
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,  
Filled her with thee, a daughter fan,  
So *laxom*, blithe, and *debonair* *pleasant*  
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest, and youthful Jollity,  
*Quips* and *cranks* and wanton *wiles*, *Turn*  
Nods and becks and wreath'd smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek, *with*  
And love to live in *dimple* *sleek* *soft*  
Sport that wrinkled Care *derides*, *desert*  
And Laughter holding both his sides  
Come, and trip it, as you go *down*  
On the light fantastic toe;

*in the air & said to be*



And in thy right hand lead with thee  
 The mountain nymph sweet Liberty;  
 And, if I give thee honour due, <sup>of the</sup>  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew  
 To live with her, and live with thee,  
 In unreprieved pleasures free, 40  
 To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And, singing, startle the dull night  
 From his watch-tower in the sky,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise,  
 Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
 And at my window bid good-morrow,  
 Through the sweet briar or the vine,  
 Or the twisted eglantine,  
 While the cock, with lively din,  
 Scatters the rear of darkness thin, 50  
 And to the struck or the barn-door,  
 Stoutly struts his dances before  
 Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
 Cheerily rouse the slumbering morn,  
 From the side of some hoar hill,  
 Through the high wood echoing shrill  
 Sometime walking, not unseen  
 By hedgerow clins, on hillocks green,  
 Right against the eastern gate  
 Where the great sun begins his state, 60  
 Robed in flames and amber light,  
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight,  
 While the ploughman, near at hand,  
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
 And the mower whets his scythe,  
 And every shepherd tells his tale  
 Under the hawthorn in the dale  
 Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
 Whilst the landskip round it measures 70

<sup>open stretch of</sup>  
 Russet lawns, and fallows grey,  
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray,  
 Mountains on whose barren breast  
 The labouring clouds do often rest;  
 Meadows trim, with daisies pied,  
 Shallow brooks, and rivers wide,  
 Towers and battlements it sees  
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,  
 Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
 The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.  
 Hard by a cottage chimney smokes  
 From betwixt two aged oaks,  
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met  
 Are at their saviour's dinner set  
 Of herbs and other country messes, <sup>dishes</sup>  
 Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses,  
 And then in haste her bower she leaves,  
 With Thestylis to bind the sheaves, <sup>of C</sup>  
 Or, if the earlier season lead, <sup>meadow</sup>  
 To the tanned haycock in the mead. <sup>a pile</sup>  
 Sometimes, with secure delight,  
 The upland hamlets will invite,  
 When the merry bells ring round,  
 And the jocund rebecks sound  
 To many a youth and many a maid  
 Dancing in the chequered shade, <sup>have</sup>  
 And young and old <sup>who</sup> come forth to play  
 On a sunshine holiday,  
 Till the livelong daylight fail  
 Then, to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
 With stories told of many a feat,  
 How Faery Mab the junks eat  
 She was pinched and pulled, she  
 And he, by Friar's lantern led,  
 Tells how the <sup>drudging</sup> goblin sweat  
 To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
<sup>Tyrion</sup>

When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
 His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
 That ten day-labourers could not end,  
 Then lies him down, the lubber fiend, 110  
 And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength, *stung*  
 And crop full out of doors he flings, *darts*  
 Ere the first cock his matin rings,  
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
 By whispering winds soon lulled asleep  
 Towered cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
 In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold, 120  
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
 Rain influence, and judge the prize  
 Of wit or arms, while both contend  
 To win her grace whom all commend,  
 There let Hymen oft appear  
 In siffion robe, with taper clear,  
 And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
 With mask and antique pageantry,  
 Such sights as youthful poets dream  
 On summer eves by haunted stream 130  
 Then to the well trod stage anon,  
 If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
 Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,  
 Warble his native wood-notes wild,  
 And ever, against eating cares,  
 Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
 Married to immortal verse,  
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
 In notes with many a winding bout  
 Of linked sweetness long drawn out 140  
 With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
 The melting voice through mazes running,

Untwisting all the chains that tie  
 The hidden soul of harmony,  
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head,  
 From golden slumber on a bed  
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
 Such strains as would have won the ear  
 Of Pluto to have quite set free  
 His half-regained Eurydice  
 These delights if thou canst give,  
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live

150

## IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,  
 The brood of Folly without father bred!  
 How little you bested, *of use*  
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!  
 Dwell in some idle brain,  
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
 As thick and numberless  
 As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,  
 Or likest hovering dreams,  
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train 10  
 But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
 Whose saintly visage is too bright  
 To hit the sense of human sight,  
 And therefore to our weaker view  
 O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue,  
 Black, but such as in esteem  
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseeem,  
 Or that staried Ethiop queen that strove  
 To set her beauty's praise above 20

The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended  
 Yet thou art higher far descended  
 Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore  
 To solitary Saturn bore,  
 His daughter she, in Saturn's reign  
 Such mixture was not held a stain  
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
 He met her, and in secret shades  
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
 Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove 30  
 Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
 All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestic train,  
 And sable stole of cypress lawn  
 O'er thy decent shoulders drawn  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step, and musing gait,  
 And looks commercing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes 40  
 There, held in holy passion still,  
 Forget thyself to marble, till  
 With a sad leaden downward cast  
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast  
 And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,  
 Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
 And hears the Muses in a ring  
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing,  
 And add to these retired Leisure,  
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure 50  
 But, first and chiefest, with thee bring  
 Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
 Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
 The Cherub Contemplation,  
 And the mute Silence hyst along,  
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,

In her sweetest saddest plight,  
 Smoothing the rugged blow of Night,  
 While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke  
 Gently o'er the accustomed oak  
 Sweet bud, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
 Most musical, most melancholy  
 Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
 I woo, to hear thy even-song,  
 And, missing thee, I walk unseen  
 On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
 To behold the wandering moon,  
 Riding near her highest noon,  
 Like one that had been led astray  
 Through the heaven's wide pathless way,  
 And oft, as if her head she bowed,  
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud  
 Oft, on a plat of rising ground,  
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
 Over some wide-watered shore,  
 Swinging slow with sullen roar,  
 Or, if the air will not permit,  
 Some still remov'd place will fit,  
 Where glowing embers through the room  
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,  
 Far from all resort of mirth,  
 Save the cricket on the hearth,  
 Or the bellman's drowsy chime  
 To bless the doors from nightly harm  
 Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,  
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
 Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,  
 With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere  
 The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
 What worlds or what vast regions hold  
 The immortal mind that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook,

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And of those demons that are found  
 In fire, air, flood, or underground  
 Whose power hath a true consent<sup>5</sup>  
 With planet or with element  
 Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
 In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
 Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
 Or the tale of Troy divine, 100  
 Or what (though rare) of later age  
 Ennobled hath the buskined stage  
 But, O sad Virgin! that thy power  
 Might raise Musæus from his bowels,  
 Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
 Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
 Drew non tears down Pluto's cheek,  
 And made Hell grant what love did seek,  
 Or call up him that left half-told 110  
 The story of Cambuscan bold,  
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
 And who had Canacè to wife,  
 That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
 And of the wondrous horse of brass  
 On which the Tartar king did ride,  
 And if aught else great bruds beside  
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
 Of turneys, and of trophies hung,  
 Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
 Where more is meant than meets the ear 120  
 Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
 Till civil-suted Morn appear,  
 Not tricked and frownced, as she was wont  
 With the Attic boy to hunt,  
 But kerchiefed in a comely cloud,  
 While rocking winds are piping loud,  
 Or ushered with a shower still,  
 When the gust hath blown his fill,

Ending on the rustling leaves,  
 With minute-drops from off the eaves 130  
 And, when the sun begins to fling  
 His flaming beams, me, Goddess, bring  
 To archèd walks of twilight groves,  
 And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,  
 Of pine, or monumental oak,  
 Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke  
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
 Or fright them from their hallowèd haunt  
 There, in close covert, by some brook,  
 Where no profaner eye may look, 140  
 Hide me from day's garish eye,  
 While the bee with honeyed thigh,  
 That at her flowery work doth sing,  
 And the waters murmuring,  
 With such consort as they keep,  
 Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep  
 And let some strange mysterious dream  
 Wave at his wings, in airy stream  
 Of lively portraiture displayed,  
 Softly on my eyelids laid, 150  
 And, as I wake, sweet music breathe  
 Above, about, or underneath,  
 Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,  
 On the unseen Genus of the wood  
 But let my due feet never fail  
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
 And love the high embowèd roof,  
 With antique pillars massy proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a dim religious light 160  
 There let the pealing organ blow,  
 To the full-voiced quire below,  
 In service high and anthems clear,  
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,



Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
 And bring all Heaven before mine eyes  
 And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell,  
 Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
 And every herb that sips the dew,  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain  
 These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
 And I with thee will choose to live

170

## ARCADES

*Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager  
 of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her  
 Family, who appear on the Scene in pastoral habit,  
 moving toward the seat of state, with this song*

## I Song

Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, look !  
 What sudden blaze of majesty  
 Is that which we from hence descry,  
 Too divine to be mistook ?

This, this is she  
 To whom our vows and wishes bend  
 Here our solemn search hath end

Fame, that her high worth to raise  
 Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,  
 We may justly now refuse  
 Of detraction from her praise .

10

Less than half we find expressed,  
 Envy bid conceal the rest

Mark what radiant state she spreads,  
 In circle round her shining throne  
 Shooting her beams like silver threads  
 This, this is she alone,  
     Sitting like a goddess bright  
     In the centre of her light

Might she the wise Latona be, 20  
 Or the towered Cybele,  
 Mother of a hundred gods?  
 Juno dares not give her odds  
     Who had thought this crime had held  
     A deity so unparalleled?

*As they come forward, THE GENIUS OF THE WOOD appears,  
 and, turning toward them, speaks*

Gen Stay, gentle Swains, for, though in this disguise,  
 I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes,  
 Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung  
 Of that renowned flood, so often sung,  
 Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice, 30  
 Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse,  
 And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,  
 Fair silver-buskin'd Nymphs, as great and good  
 I know this quest of yours and free intent  
 Was all in honour and devotion meant  
 To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,  
 Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,  
 And with all helpful service will comply  
 To further this night's glad solemnity,  
 And lead ye where ye may more near behold 40  
 What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold,  
 Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,

Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon  
 For know, by lot from Jove, I am the Power  
 Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bowels,  
 To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove  
 With ringlets quaint and wanton windings wove,  
 And all my plants I save from nightly ill  
 Of noisome winds and blasting vapours chill,  
 And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,  
 And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,  
 Or what the cross due-looking planet smites,  
 Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites  
 When evening grey doth rise, I fetch my round  
 Over the mount, and all this hallowed ground,  
 And early, ere the odorous breath of morn  
 Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn  
 Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,  
 Number my ranks, and visit every sprout

50

With puissant words and murmurs made to bless  
 But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness  
 Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I  
 To the celestial Sirens' harmony,  
 That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,  
 And sing to those that hold the vital shears,  
 And turn the adamantine spindle round  
 On which the fate of gods and men is wound  
 Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,  
 To lull the daughters of Necessity,  
 And keep unsteady Nature to her law,  
 And the low world in measured motion draw  
 After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
 Of human mould with gross unpurged ear  
 And yet such music worthiest were to blaze  
 The peerless height of her immortal praise  
 Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,  
 If my inferior hand or voice could hit  
 Inimitable sounds Yet, as we go,

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70

Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show  
 I will assay, her worth to celebrate, 80  
 And so attend ye toward her glittering state,  
 Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,  
 Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem

II. *Song*

O'er the smooth enamelled green,  
 Where no print of step hath been,  
 Follow me, as I sing  
 And touch the warbled string,  
 Under the shady roof  
 Of branching elm stair-proof  
 Follow me 90  
 I will bring you where she sits,  
 Clad in splendour as befits  
 Her deity  
 Such a rural Queen  
 All Arcadia hath not seen

III *Song*

Nymphs and Shepherds, dance no more  
 By sandy Ladon's lilyed banks,  
 On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,  
 Trip no more in twilight ranks,  
 Though Erymanth your loss deploire, 100  
 A better soil shall give ye thanks  
 From the stony Mænalus  
 Bring your flocks, and live with us,  
 Here ye shall have greater grace,  
 To serve the Lady of this place  
 Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,  
 Yet Syrinx well might wait on her  
 Such a rural Queen  
 All Arcadia hath not seen

## LYCIDAS

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Sea, 1637, and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
 Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
 Compels me to disturb your season due,  
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer  
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew  
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme  
 He must not float upon his watery bier  
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
 Without the meed of some melodious tear

10

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well  
 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;  
 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string  
 Hence with denial vain and coy excuse  
 So may some gentle Muse

With lucky words favour my destined urn,  
 And as he passes turn,

20

And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

For we were nused upon the self-same hill,  
 Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;  
 Together both, ere the high lawns appeared  
 Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
 We drove a-field, and both together heard  
 What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
 Oft till the star that rose at evening bright

30

Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel,  
 Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
 Tempered to the oaten flute,  
 Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
 From the glad sound would not be absent long,  
 And old Damoetas loved to hear our song

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
 Now thou art gone and never must return!  
 Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, '40  
 And all their echoes, mourn  
 The willows, and the hazel copses green,  
 Shall now no more be seen  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays  
 As killing as the canker to the rose,  
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,  
 When first the white-thorn blows,  
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50  
 Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?  
 For neither were ye playing on the steep  
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream  
 Ay me! I fondly dream  
 "Had ye been there," for what could that have done?  
 What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son, '50  
 Whom universal nature did lament,  
 When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
 His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?  
 Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
 To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,  
 And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?

Were it not better done, as others use,  
 To sport with Amayllis in the shade,  
 Or with the tangles of Næra's hair?  
 Fame is the spin that the clear spirit doth  
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)  
 To scorn delights and live laborious days,  
 But the fan guerdon when we hope to find,  
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
 Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,  
 And slits the thin-spun life "But not the praise,"  
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears  
 "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
 Nor in the glittering foil  
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove,  
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
 Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed"

70

80

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood,  
 Smooth-sliding Mincus, crowned with vocal reeds,  
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood  
 But now my oar proceeds,  
 And listens to the Herald of the Sea, *the Triton*  
 That came in Neptune's plea  
 He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
 What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?  
 And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
 That blows off from each beak'd promontory  
 They knew not of his story,  
 And sage Hippotadès their answer brings,  
 'Tis not a blast was from his dungeon strayed  
 The air was calm, and on the level bune  
 'Tis Panopè with all her sisters played  
 'Tis that fatal and perfidious bark, *the*  
 Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine

90

100

Next, Camus, reverend sue, went footing slow.  
 His mantle hany, and his bonnet sedge,  
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
 Lake to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe  
 "Ah! who hath left," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"  
 Last came, and last did go,  
 The Pilot of the Galilean Lake,  
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110  
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain) *with force*  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake —  
 "How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
 Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,  
 Creep in, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
 They little reckoning make  
 How much to ramble at the shearers' feast,  
 How much to mislead the worthy bidden guest  
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least 120  
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped,  
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
 But, swoln with wind and the rank must they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread,  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said 130  
 But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more"  
 Return, Alphæus, the dread voice is past  
 That shrunk thy streams, return Sicilian Muse,  
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues *well shaped*  
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers (use) *dwell*  
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
 On whose fresh lap the swart star spaiely looks,



Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,  
 That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers, 140  
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
 The glowing violet,  
 The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears,  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed, 150  
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lie  
 For so, to interpose a little ease,  
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,  
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding sea  
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world,  
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied, 160  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellérus old,  
 Where the great Vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold  
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth  
 And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth  
 Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more,  
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor  
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore, 170  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky  
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
 Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,  
 Where, other groves and other streams along,

With nectar pure his oozy locks he lives,  
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love  
 There entertain him all the Saints above,  
 In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes  
 Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more,  
 Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore  
 In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
 To all that wander in that perilous flood

180

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,  
 While the still morn went out with sandals grey  
 He touched the tender stops of various quills,  
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay  
 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,  
 And now was dropt into the western bay  
 At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue  
 To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new

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## SONNETS

## I

[TO THE NIGHTINGALE]

O NIGHTINGALE that on yon bloomy spray *Spring*  
 Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,  
 Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,  
 While the jolly hours lead on propitious May  
 Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,  
 First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,  
 Portend success in love O, if Jove's will  
 Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay

Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate  
 Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh, 10  
*Since* As thou from year to year hast sung too late  
 For my relief, yet hadst no reason why  
 Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,  
 Both them I serve, and of their train am I

## II

[ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF  
 TWENTY-THREE]

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!  
 My hasting days fly on with full career,  
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th  
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth  
 That I to manhood am arrived so near,  
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
*whether* That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th  
 Yet, *be* it less or more, or soon or slow,  
 It shall be still in strictest measure *even equal* 10  
 To that same lot, however mean or high,  
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven,  
*even* All *is*, if I have grace to use it so,  
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye

## VIII

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY

CAPTAIN or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,  
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,  
 If deed of honour did thee ever please,  
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms  
 He can requite thee, for he knows the charms  
 That call fame on such gentle acts as these,

And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,  
 Whatever clime the sun's bright circle waifs -  
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower  
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare 10  
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower  
 Went to the ground, and the repeated an  
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power  
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare

## IX

[TO A VIRTUOUS YOUNG LADY]

LADY, that in the prime of earliest youth  
 Wisely hast shunned the broad way and the green,  
 And with those few art eminently seen  
 That labour up the hill of heavenly Truth,  
 The better part with Mary and with Ruth  
 Chosen thou hast, and they that overween,  
 And at thy growing virtues fret their spleen,  
 No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth  
 Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends  
 To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light, 10  
 And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure  
 Thou, when the Bridegroom with his feastful friends  
 Passes to bliss at the mid-hour of night,  
 Hast gained thy entrance, Virgin wise and pure

## X

TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY

DAUGHTER to that good Earl, once President  
 Of England's Council and her Treasury,  
 Who lived in both unstained with gold or fee,  
 And left them both, more in himself content,  
 Till the sad breaking of that Parliament

Broke him, as that dishonest victory  
 At Chæroneæ, fatal to liberty,  
 Killed with report that old man eloquent,  
 Though later born than to have known the days  
 Wherein your father flourished, yet by you, 10  
 Madam, methinks I see him living yet  
 So well your words his noble virtues praise  
 That all both judge you to relate him true  
 And to possess them, honoured Margaret

## XI

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED UPON MY  
 WRITING CERTAIN TREATISES

A BOOK was writ of late called *Tetrachordon*,  
 And woven close, both matter, form, and style,  
 The subject new it walked the town awhile,  
 Numbering good intellects, now seldom pored on  
 Cries the stall-reader, "Bless us! what a word on  
 A title-page is this!", and some in file  
 Stand spelling false, while one might walk to Mile  
 End Green Why, is it harder, sirs, than *Gordon*,  
*Colkitto*, or *Macdonnell*, or *Galasp*? 9  
 Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek  
 That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp  
 Thy age, like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek,  
 Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,  
 When thou taught'st Cambridge and King Edward  
 Greek.

## XII

ON THE SAME

I DID but prompt the age to quit their clogs  
 By the known rules of ancient liberty,  
 When straight a barbarous noise environs me

## SONNETS

Of owls and cuckoos, asses apes and dogs,  
 As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs  
   Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,  
   Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee  
   But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,  
 That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,  
   And still revolt when Truth would set them free 10  
   Licence they mean when they cry Liberty,  
 For who loves that must first be wise and good  
   But from that mark how far they rove we see,  
   For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood

### XIII

#### ON THE NEW FORCES OF CONSCIENCE UNDER THE LONG PARLIAMENT

BECAUSE you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,  
   And with stiff vows renounced his Liturgy,  
   To seize the widowed whore Plurality  
   From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred,  
 Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword  
   To force our consciences that Christ set free,  
   And ride us with a Classic Hierarchy,  
   Taught ye by mere A S and Rutherford?  
 Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,  
   Would have been held in high esteem with Paul 10  
   Must now be named and printed heretics  
 By shallow Edwards and Scotch What-d'ye-call!  
   But we do hope to find out all your tricks,  
   Your plots and picking, worse than those of Trent,  
   That so the Parliament  
 May with their wholesome and preventive shears  
 Clip your phylacteries, though baulk your ears,  
   And succour our just fears,  
 When they shall read this clearly in your charge  
 New *Presbyter* is but old *Priest* writ large

Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains  
 Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
 Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

## XVII

## TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER

VANE, young in years, but in sage counsel old,  
 Than whom a better senator ne'er held  
 The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repelled  
 The fierce Epirot, and the African bold,  
 Whether to settle peace, or to unfold  
 The drift of hollow states hard to be spelled,  
 Then to advise how war may best upheld  
 Move by her two main nerves, non and gold,  
 In all her equipage, besides, to know  
 Both spiritual power and civil, what each means, 10  
 What severs each, thou hast learned, which few have  
 done  
 The bounds of either sword to thee we owe  
 Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans  
 In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son

## XVIII

## ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,  
 Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
 When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
 Forget not in thy book record their groans  
 Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled  
 Mother with infant down the rocks Their moans  
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they

To heaven Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10  
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
 A hundredfold who, having learnt thy way,  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe

## XIX

## [ON HIS BLINDNESS]

When I consider how my light is spent  
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide  
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
 My true account, lest He returning chide,  
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"  
 I fondly ask But Patience, to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts Who best 10  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best His state  
 Is kingly thousands at his bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest,  
 They also serve who only stand and wait"

## XX

## [TO MR LAWRENCE]

LAWRENCE, of virtuous father virtuous son,  
 Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,  
 Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire  
 Help waste a sullen day, what may be won  
 From the hard season gaining? Time will run  
 On smoother, till Favonius reinspire  
 The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire  
 The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun



What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,  
 Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise      10  
 To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice  
 Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?  
 He who of those delights can judge, and spare  
 To interpose them oft, is not unwise

[TO CYRIACK SKINNER]

CYRIACK, whose grandsire on the royal bench  
 Of British Themis, with no mean applause,  
 Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws,  
 Which others at then bar so often wring,  
 To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench  
 In mirth that after no repenting draws,  
 Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,  
 And what the Swede intend, and what the French  
 To measure life learn thou betimes, and know      10  
 Toward solid good what leads the nearest way,  
 For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,  
 And disapproves that care, though wise in show,  
 That with superfluous burden loads the day,  
 And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains

✓ [TO THE SAME.]

CYRIACK, this three years' day these eyes, though clear,  
 To outward view, of blemish or of spot,  
 Bereft of light, then seeming have forgot,  
 Not to then idle orbs doth sight appear  
 Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,  
 Or man, or woman Yet I argue not  
 Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot  
 211, 1, 12

Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer  
 Right onward What supports me, dost thou ask?  
 The conscience, friend, to have lost them overphied 10  
 In Liberty's defence, my noble task,  
 Of which all Europe talks from side to side  
 This thought might lead me through the world's vain  
 mask  
 Content, though blind, had I no better guide

## XXIII

[TO THE MEMORY OF HIS SECOND WIFE]

Without I saw my late espoused saint  
 Brought to me like Alcestris from the grave,  
 Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,  
 Rescued from Death by force, though pale and faint  
 Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint  
 Purification in the Old Law did save,  
 And such as yet once more I trust to have  
 Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,  
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind  
 Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight 10  
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined  
 So clear as in no face with more delight  
 But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,  
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night

## NOTES.

### SONG ON MAY MORNING

This piece is generally assigned to the first of May, 1630 Prof Masson is inclined to date it three years later, thus bringing it within the Horton group of Milton's earlier poems It certainly associates itself with these through its bright allusions to the spring-time of external nature and of human life, and it gives sure evidence of Milton's "divine ear" for metrical effect The trochaic effect prevails in the lines in which May is welcomed, compare the welcome to Mirth and Melancholy in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* respectively The contemplative side of Milton's youth does not here reveal itself, we see rather the spirit of those days

"When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season"

*Comus*, 670

1 morning star The planet Venus, as the morning-star, was called Phosphorus or Lucifer (the light bringer), and, as the evening star, Hesperus Hence Tennyson's allusion—

"Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night  
Sweet Hesper Phosphor, double name"

*In Memoriam*

In *Comus* 93, it is the "star that bids the shepherd's fold," and in *Lyc* 30, "the star that rose at evening bright" In the last of these passages the pronoun *his* is applied to the star, in this poem (line 2) *her* is used This is in allusion to the planet as Venus, fit companion for the flowery May

harbinger, forerunner This is the current sense of the word, radically, it means 'harbourer,' one who goes before another and prepares a 'harbour' or lodging for him (M E herbergeour) The origin of the word is disguised by the intrusion of the letter *n*, as in *messenger* from 'message,' *porringer* from 'porridge,' etc

2 Comes dancing from the east Compare Spenser's *Astrophel*,  
11 'The dancing day, forthcoming from the east' Dancing is in adverbial relation to *comes*

2 leads with her compare the language of *L'Allegro*, 35

3 flowery May, etc Compare *Son* 14, also Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, 'On Mutability,' vii 34

"Then came fair May, the fairest maid on ground,  
And throwing flowers out of her lap around"

4 yellow cowslip In *Lyc* 147, it is "the cowslip wan," where the epithet is suited to the context In *Comus*, 898, we have "the cowslip's velvet head"

pale primrose In *Comus* 671 (see above) Spring is called "the primrose season" For the explanation of the epithet *pale*, see *Lyc* 142 and note

5 that dost inspire Mirth, etc, i.e. that fillest us with mirth, etc Compare Spenser, *On Mutability*, vii (in allusion to May)

"Lord! how all creatures laughed when her they spied  
And leapt and danced as they had ravished been!  
And Cupid's self about her fluttered all in green"

inspire = breathe in comp *Son* 22 6, note

7 of thy dressing, i.e. dressed by thee Compare such phrases as 'of thy doing' = done by thee

8 Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing, i.e. the hills and the dales rejoice because you have blessed them *Hill* and *dale* are used generically, and the verb is singular because it is to be supplied with each of the nouns but see also note on *Son* 22 5 *Boast* is here used transitively

9 Thus, i.e. in these words "this is the form which our early song of salutation takes"

10 And welcome thee compare Chaucer, *Knights Tale*—

"O May, with all thy flowers and thy green,  
Right welcome be thou, fair fresh May"

wish thee long, i.e. wish thee to be long or remain long with us

## ON SHAKESPEARE

These lines were written in 1630, when Milton was twenty-two years of age They were printed anonymously among the commendatory verses prefixed to the second folio of Shakespeare (1632) under the title "An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W Shakespeare" The poem may have been occasioned by some proposal to erect a monument to Shakespeare, it is more probable, however, that it was a purely spontaneous tribute to the genius of the great dramatist

1 What needs etc Here 'what' is equivalent to 'for what' or 'why' compare

"What need we any spur but our own cause?"

*Julius Caesar*, II. 1. 123

In Elizabethan English *need* is often found with *what*, and in such cases it is sometimes difficult to say whether 'what' is an adverb and 'need' a verb, or 'what' an adjective and 'need' a noun

"What need the bridge much broader than the flood?"

*W. A. A.*, I. 1. 318

Either "What need the bridge (be) broader?" or "What need is there (that) the bridge (be) broader?" (*Abbott's Shakespearean Grammar*, s. 297)

2 The labour of an age The Pyramids of Egypt are monuments that may well be described thus: see I. 1

3 Or that his etc the construction is, 'What needs Shale spare that his hallowed reliques should, etc

hallowed, sacred

reliques, remains This is now commonly written *relics* (Lat. *reliquiae* remains)

4 star ypointing etc, rising far into the heavens For the form *ypointing* see note I. 116. 12, in the very earliest stages of the language the prefix *yp* was not confined to the past participle, being found along with the infinitive and the present. But ordinarily it belonged to the past participle, and Milton's use of it with a present participle is peculiar though not without precedent

5 son of memory This may mean 'immortal poet,' or 'Muse' (as in *Lyc* 10), the muses being sometimes called 'daughters of Memory'

heir of fame this strengthens and also expands the sense of "son of memory" 'Heir of fame' is one who inherits or possesses fame (Lat. *heres*, an heir or possessor) (comp. *Lyc* 78 where it is said that the true poet cannot be deprived of his need of fame)

6 What need'st thou see note on I. 1 the object of *need'st* is *truth*

7 astonishment As the strict sense of *astound* is 'to stun,' i.e. to render incapable of thought or movement, the idea is the same as that expressed by I. 14, and by *II Pens* 42, where see notes

8 livelong Milton first wrote *lasting*, which gives the meaning. The word is a form of *live* + *long*, but the usage of the two forms is now distinct. *Livelong* means "lasting through life," while *last-*

*long* merely indicates long continuance, without reference to any definite period Comp *L'Alleg* 99

9 slow-endavouring, laborious Milton has perhaps in these lines made a modest reference to his own fastidious mode of composition

10 Thy easy numbers flow, &c thy numbers flow with ease  
'Numbers, like the synonymous word *rime* (see note, *Lyc* 11), is here used for verse Compare Pope's lines on himself

"As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,  
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came"

Milton alludes to Shakespeare's marvellous ease of composition the editors of the first folio of Shakespeare said, "His mind and hand went together; And what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers"

that each heart, the construction is, '*whilst that each heart,*' etc In Elizabethan English the use of *that* as a conjunctive suffix is very common, we find 'when that,' 'why that,' 'whilst that,' 'though that,' 'since that,' in all of which cases we should now omit *that*

11 unvalued book, &c invaluable book See note on *L'Alleg*  
40 Shakespeare has 'unvalued jewels' = jewels whose value cannot be estimated Shelley, in the opposite sense of *worthless*, has 'unvalued stones' = stones having no value

12 Delphic lines, &c oracular lines, as if spoken by the greatest of all oracles, viz., that in Apollo's temple at Delphi

took, taken This is a form of the past tense used as the past participle Shakespeare has *took* for *taken*, *shaked* and *shook* for *shaken*, *arose* for *arisen*, etc Comp *Arc* 4

13 bereaving The construction is, 'bereaving our fancy of itself,' &c in our efforts to follow your train of thought, we are carried out of ourselves, we become monuments of your power Compare *Com* 260

14 Dost make us marble, etc; we become as insensible as marble to all around us owing to our ecstatic delight in your works Such testimony to your genius is a far grander monument than the marble tomb of an earthly king Comp *Il Pens* 42, the same idea occurs in the common phrase, "to be petrified with astonishment"

15 sepulchred entombed or commemorated Comp Shakespeare's *Sonnet lxxxix*

"When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie,  
Your monument shall be my gentle verse," etc

The accent in 'sepulchred' is on the penult  
The poem is not a sonnet, it consists simply of eight couplets

## ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

The two short pieces on this subject bring Milton before us in the mood of L. Allegro, who delights in "guips and cranks and wanton wiles" They were probably written in January, 1631, the date of Hobson's death

Thomas Hobson was for more than sixty years the University carrier between Cambridge and the Bull's Inn, London, he carried letters, parcels, and sometimes passengers in his waggon In 1630, owing to the Plague, the authorities forbade Hobson to continue his weekly journeys, and for eight or nine months the old man chafed under this enforced idleness His health broke down, and when the Plague had abated, he was too ill to resume work He sickened and died at the age of eighty six The witty language of Milton's verses is based chiefly on the analogy between Hobson's almost hum drum existence and the course of life in general, and on the fact that the "Vacancy" seems to have been the immediate cause of his death His memory is kept alive not only in Milton's lines, but also in the well-known saying, "Hobson's choice"—an allusion to his practice, in letting out his horses of compelling the hirer to take that horse which happened to stand next the stable door

1 girt, girth or girdle all cognate words The quibbles in the first four lines turn on Hobson's likeness to a horse that has stuck in the mire, and in its struggles has fallen and broken its girth

3 twenty to one Here *to* seems to have the force of "in comparison with", 'twenty to one' is used to indicate a high degree of probability Comp Abbott, § 187

4 slough, hollow filled with mud, a mire

5 'Twas, familiar idiom for 'he was' The meaning is that the carrier had so continually shifted from place to place that Death, though it had been 'dodging with' him for ten years, had been unable until now to overtake him

8 Dodged with 'To dodge' is to move quickly hither and thither, 'to dodge with' another is to follow in his track

10 carriage, carrying The whole line is a conditional clause

13 ta'en up his latest inn, taken up his final abode

14 The sense is 'Death, kindly performing the duties of a chamberlain or attendant at an inn, pointed out to him the room he was to occupy,' etc 'Chamberlain properly 'one in charge of chambers or rooms', the termination (*in* (or *lain*) is a corruption of A S *ling*, seen in *lordling*, etc, and must not be mistaken for the purely diminutive termination seen in *duckling*, etc.

## ANOTHER ON THE SAME

- 3 'It was so ordained, that he should not die while he,' etc
- 4 might, was able to, could. This is the original sense of the word, which is the past tense of *may* (A S *magan*, to be able)
- 5 Made of sphere metal, i.e. made of the same metal as the heavenly spheres whose motion is perpetual. Hobson's "revolutions" were between Cambridge and London.
- 6 was at stay, i.e. had come to a stop
- 7 'Motion is estimated in time but (on the contrary) Hobson's time (i.e. life) was estimated in motion (i.e. in the journeys he made)'
- 9 engine, machine see note, *Lyc.* 130
- 10 His principles, i.e. principles of motion, moving forces straight, straightway. In modern English *straight* is still used as an adverb, as 'He went *straight* to the point', but to indicate time the adverb *straightway* (compounded of a noun and an adjective) is employed. *Straight* is radically equivalent to 'stretched or drawn out'
- 12 breathing. In the same way we speak of a time of leisure as a "*breathing-space*"
- 14 vacation term. These are University terms punningly applied to Hobson's period of idleness and to the term (Lat *terminus*) or allotted period of his life
- 15 'He sickened in order to have something to do'
- 16 quickened, revived. A S *cwic*, living
- 20 The construction is 'I vow that if I, the carrier, am put down, I will make six bearers,' i.e. six men will be required to carry me to the grave
21. Ease disease. 'Disease' = want of ease
- 22 He died for heaviness light, i.e. he died from heaviness of spirit because he was no longer able to load his cart  
'For' = because of, see Abbott, § 149, for examples of this use of *for*. 'That' = because. "since *that*" represents different cases of the relative, it may mean 'in *that*,' 'for *that*,' 'because' (*quod*), or 'at *which time*' (*quum*)" Abbott, § 284
- 25 'So that (as some say) he continued to the very last to cry "More weight," as if he were being pressed to death' There was a mode of torture by which the victim was pressed to death, his sufferings being terminated by 'more weight'



25 *be* on this indicative use of *be*, see note, *Kpt on M. of W* 55, and Abbott, § 300

28 He had been, : *e* he would have been

29 Obedient to the moon As he made four journeys every month, his course was, like that of the tides, governed by the moon

32 *wain* increase A pun on the two identical sounds—*wain*, a waggon or cart, and *wane*, decrease, applied to the moon in her third and fourth quarters

33 His letters, : *e* the letters which he had been entrusted to deliver

34 superscription, : *e* Milton's own verses

## AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER

This piece, in the metre of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, was probably written immediately after the death of the Marchioness in 1631. She was the first wife of the fifth Marquis of Winchester, and died in child birth at the age of 23. The poet-laureate, Ben Jonson, and others lamented her death in verse

1 *inter*, hold the remains of This is a peculiar use of the word when used actively its subject is generally a person or persons, not an inanimate object

3 A Viscount's daughter She was the daughter of Viscount Savage

an Earl's heir. Her mother had been the eldest daughter and one of the heirs of Thomas Darey, Earl of Rivers

4 Besides what, etc The sense is, 'She was a Viscount's daughter, and an Earl's heir, in addition to all that her virtues added to these earthly honours' 'Besides,' a preposition, is here a trisyllable

6 More than, etc This line is explanatory of *what* in line 4

7 Summers three times eight, etc In prosaic language, 'She was twenty three years of age' Dante and Spenser delight in these round about ways of measuring time

8 told, counted see note, *L'Alleg* 67, on this use of *tell*

alas ! too soon, etc This and the two succeeding lines are attributive "She, who, alas ! was too soon to dwell with dark-

ness and with death " 'With darkness and with death' may be regarded as an example of hendiadys, being equivalent to 'in the dark tomb'

12 her praise, i.e. praise of her, her fame Comp *Lyc* 76

13 Nature and Fate, etc. : 'Nature and Fate would not then have disagreed,' i.e. she would have died in the ordinary course of Nature

16 a lover meet, i.e. a husband worthy of her

17 The virgin quire, etc. 'the brides maids having called upon Hymen, that god appeared, but his torch burned dimly, and in the marriage wreath which he carried a cypress bud might have been noticed' See note on *Hymen*, *L'Alleg* 125

quire a band of singers This is another spelling of *chor* (Lat *chorus*) The chorus of the Greek drama was a singing as well as a dancing body it was supposed to represent the sentiments of the audience *Quire*, a collection of sheets of paper, is a distinct word, which is variously derived from O F *quarier*, a small written book, and from Lat *quatuor*, four

22 a cypress bud, an omen that the marriage would speedily be followed by a funeral Cypress garlands were carried at funerals the name of the tree is said to be derived from Cyprus (comp note, *Il Pcons* 35)

23 Once had, etc. She had already had a son, afterwards the sixth Marquis of Winchester

24 To greet her of, etc., i.e. to salute or congratulate her as the mother of a lovely son 'Of' this preposition is thus frequently used in Elizabethan English to indicate the circumstances of an action, and may be rendered by 'concerning' or 'about' or 'on account of' Abbott, § 174

26 calls Lucina. Lucina was the Roman goddess who presided over child birth, her name denotes 'the bringer to light' Compare Spenser, *F Q* II. i, lxx

" And bade me call Lucina to be near  
Lucina came a man-child forth I brought "

28 Atropos, etc., i.e. Atröpos, one of the Fates, who cuts the thread of life, came instead of Lucina see notes, *Arc* 65 69, *Lyc* 75

30 at once, i.e. at one and the same time

fruit and tree, child and mother

31 hapless unfortunate The student should note how words like *happy*, *lucky*, *fortunate*, which strictly refer to a person's hap, whether good or bad, have been restricted to good hap in

order to give them an unfavourable meaning a negative prefix or suffix is used

33 languished, exhausted Comp Com 743

"If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,  
It withers on the stalk with languished head

also *Par Lost*, v, 496 The suffix *ed* is frequently used in Elizabethan English where we now have *ing* (Abbott, § 371)

35 slip, a small branch or twig

36 Saved nip comp *Sams Agon* 1576 -

"the first born bloom of spring  
Nipt with the lagging reat of winter's frost

37 pride of her carnation train, i.e. the pride of the whole garden, the pride of the flowers surrounding the tender slip  
On 'train' see *Il Pens* 10, note, 'carnation' is the name of a particular flower, so called from its flesh colour (Lat *caro*, flesh), but it is probably here used merely to denote beauty.

38 unheedy, unheeding, careless Compare Shakespeare,

"Wings and no eyes figure *unheedy* haste"  
W A D 1 1 237

The suffix *-y* also occurs where we would now use the present participle in 'slumbry agitation,' *Vacheth* v 1 237

43 those pearls of dew, etc 'Those peevly dew drops which rest upon the fair blossom prove to be tears shed by the morning as a preface of its speedy death'

The comparison of dew drops to tears is frequent in poetry comp Chesterfield's *Advice*

"Those tears of the sky for the loss of the sun"

46 hastening funeral, speedy death The Latin *funus* = death

49 this thy travail 'this' and 'travail' are in apposition

50 seize, possess, give possession of This is a legal sense of the word comp *Case*, I 52

51 That, etc The construction is, '(You) who, in order to give the world increase, have shortened your own life'

55 be, are This use of *be* in the indicative is frequent in Elizabethan English, especially with a plural nominative and after *where*, *there*, *here*, etc It is used with reference to a number of persons or things, regarded as a class Comp Com 12, 519, 608

tears of perfect moan. 'Perfect moan' = sincere or great

sorrow - 'perfect' has its original sense of 'complete,' as in line 73 of *Comus*, "so perfect is their misery"

56 Weept, wept - another form of the participle See note, *L'Alleg* 105

Helicon, a mountain in Boeotia sacred to the Muses the tears wept in Helicon are the elegiac verses of the various poets who lamented the death of the Marchioness, comp *Lyc* 14, "melodious tear"

57 And some flowers Came The construction is 'And here are some flowers, etc' The *flowers* and *bays* referred to are the verses written by Milton (and perhaps by other Cambridge men) The *Cume* is the river Cam, see *Lyc* 103 The bay of laurel was sacred to Apollo, the god of song

58 For thy hearse, to strew the ways, i.e. to strew the ways for thy hearse

'Hearse' does not here denote 'tomb,' as in line 151 of *Lycidas*, it may be rendered 'bier' See note, *Lyc* 151

60 Devoted to, dedicated to

61. bright Saint comp *Lyc* 172 181.

62. much like to thee in story, whose story closely resembles yours

63 fair Syrian shepherdess an allusion to Rachel, the wife of Jacob and the mother of Joseph Like the Marchioness, she died at the birth of her second child See *Genesis*, xxix, xxx, xxxi

66 served for her before Jacob served Laban seven years in order to obtain his daughter Rachel to wife, he was, however, deceived into marrying her sister Leah, and had to serve other seven years before he was allowed to marry Rachel

68 Through pangs fled to felicity the pangs of child birth caused her death, and thereby enabled her to enter upon the joys of heaven Comp Spenser *F* Q II i lii

"And ended all her woe in quiet death"

On this line Dunster says 'We cannot too much admire the beauty of this line I wish it had closed the poem, which it would have done with singular effect'

72 Like fortunes, etc, i.e. similar fortunes may make her soul acquainted with thee

73 With thee thore clad, etc, i.e. with thee who in heaven art clad in dazzling splendour *Shiren* is cognate with *show* comp *Comus*, 89}

74 Marchioness and Queen are in apposition to thee

## ON TIME

This piece, probably written about the beginning of 1634, bears in Milton's draft the following title—*On Time to be set on a Clock case*. It was formerly a common practice to print on the faces of clocks such sentiments as *Tempus fugit* (time flies)

1 envious Time, comp Son ii 1, "Time, the subtle thief of youth"

2 leaden stepping, tedious An adjective formed, as it were, from a previous compound noun "leaden step" Comp the form of the adjective "rushy-fringed" Com 890

3 the heavy plummet's pace A 'plummet' is a leaden weight the word is cognate with 'plumb' (Fr *plomb*, lead) The poet refers to the weights in a clock which descend very slowly

4 And glut thyself, etc As in l 9, Time is represented as devouring all the transitory vanities of this world, afterwards, only Eternity and all things truly good will remain

9 when as *as* is a conjunctive suffix See note, *On Shal* 10

12 individual, indivisible, inseparable This is the sense of the Latin *indivisus* it is frequent in Milton See *Pur Lost*, ii 486, "an individual solace"

14 sincerely, perfectly, see Com 451, "When a soul is found sincerely so," etc

18 happy making sight "the plain English of *beatific vision*" (Newton) The phrase 'to whose happy-making sight' depends on 'climb' Comp *Pur Lost*, i 681

20 quit, freed from all this earthly grossness The word is originally an adjective and is so used here from it comes the verb 'to quit' = to be *quit* or freed

21 Attired, crowned The head dresses of Elizabethan ladies were called 'attires,' and to *attire* oneself was to put on the head dress see note, *Lyc* 146

22 Those who gain eternal life are said to triumph over Death, Chance, and Time Compare *Pur Lost*, iii 398

## L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO

These titles are Italian and may be translated 'the cheerful man' and 'the thoughtful man'. Milton probably chose the words not so much because they exactly expressed the characteristics of the two men represented as because they were less likely to lead to misconception of his meaning than the words 'Mirth' and 'Melancholy'. *Allegro* comes from Lat *alacer*, from which we have the word 'alacrity,' and there is an air of briskness pervading the whole poem so called, the movement never flags. We have, "*Haste* thee, nymph," etc., l. 25; "Come, and *trip* it," l. 33, "*In haste* her bower she leaves," l. 87, "Out of doors he *flings*," l. 113, and in many other ways animation and buoyancy are indicated. The whole piece, too, is full of sound, from the morning song of the lark to the whispering winds of evening, and from the merry bells of the upland hamlets to the busy hum of men in towered cities. So far, at any rate, the title *L'Allegro* is not at variance with the poet's meaning.

*Penseroso*, from the same root as *pensare*, avoids the association of ill humour which belonged to the word 'Melancholy,' though the Italian word *pensoso* means 'anxious' or 'full of care'. Il *Penseroso*, however, is not full of care, his mind is tranquil and contemplative, and, like the ancient Greek philosopher, he has learned to be able to endure his own company. Solitude is to him the nurse of Contemplation. There is therefore less rapidity and continuity of movement, and fewer sounds in the *Penseroso* than in the *Allegro* everything in it moves more slowly and quietly.

The two poems are companion pieces, and the student must study them together in order to observe how far the one is the complement, rather than the contrast, of the other. The subjoined analysis may serve to some extent as a guide, it cannot, however, obviate the necessity for careful study of the means by which the poet effects his purpose in each piece. The two pieces may be viewed as pictures of two moods of Milton's own mind—the mind of a young and high souled student open to all the impressions of nature. They are described by Wordsworth (*Preface*, 1815) as idylls in which the appearances of external nature are given in conjunction with the character and sentiments of the observer. They are not mere descriptions of any scene or scenes that actually came under Milton's eye, though there is no doubt that the scenery round Horton has left its traces upon the pictures. Each records the events of an ideal day of twenty-four hours—beginning in *L'Allegro* with the song of the lark and in *Il Penseroso* with that of the nightingale. It is impossible to say with certainty which was written first, but there can be no

of a corroding anxiety, eating into the very  
anxiety, but thoughtfulness.

hesitation in saying that Il Penseroso is a man much more after Milton's own heart than L'Allegro, i.e. he represents a much more characteristic mood of Milton's mind and the many ways in which this preference reveals itself should not fail to attract the student's notice

## ANALYSIS

## L'ALLEGRO

- 1 'Loathed Melancholy' banished  
from L'Allegro's presence  
(a) Her parentage stated  
(b) Her fit abode described 1 10

- 2 Welcome to 'heart-easing Mirth'.  
(a) Her description.  
(b) Her parentage 11 24

- 3 Mirth's companions 25-40

- 4 Pleasures of the Morning  
(a) The lark's song  
(b) Other sights and sounds of the  
glorious sunrise (Allegro be-  
ing not *in* and *out-of*  
doors). 41-63

- 5 Pleasures of the bright Noon-day  
and Afternoon  
(a) The landscape  
(b) Country employments and  
enjoyments. 69 99

- 6 Social pleasures of the Evening—  
tales told by the fireside 100 116

- 7 Pleasures of the Midnight hour,  
*while others sleep*  
(a) The reading of old Romances  
(b) The reading of Comedy 117 134

- 8 Music lulls him to sleep  
(a) The music suited to his mood,  
(b) Melting music associated with  
sweet thoughts 135 150

- 9 L'Allegro does not look beyond  
these delights ]

- 10 Acceptance of Mirth. 151 152

## IL PENSEROSO

- 1 'Vain deluding joys' banished  
from Il Penseroso's presence :  
(a) Their parentage stated  
(b) Their fit abode described 1 10

- 2 Welcome to 'divinest Melancholy'  
(a) Her description.  
(b) Her parentage 11-30

- 3 Melancholy's companions. 31 55

- 4 Pleasures of the Evening  
(a) The nightingale's song  
(b) Other sights and sounds of the  
moonlit evening (Penseroso  
being *in* and *in-out-of*  
doors, then *in* *in-door*s 56-84

- 5 Pleasures of the 'Midnight hour'  
(a) The study of Philosophy  
(b) The study of Tragedy and  
other serious literature 85-120

- 6 Lonely pleasures of the stormy  
Morning 121-130

- 7 Pleasures of the 'flaring' Noon-  
day (but only in the shade),  
*until sleep comes* 131 150

- 8 Music wakes him from sleep  
(a) The music suited to his mood,  
(b) The 'pealing organ' associated  
with the 'studious cloister' 151 166

- 9 Il Penseroso's aspirations 167-174

- 10 Acceptance of Melancholy 175 176

## L'ALLEGRO

1 Hence adverbs, when thus used to convey a command, have the meaning of a whole sentence, e.g. hence = go hence, compare the imperative use of away! up! down! etc. 'Hence' represents an A S word *heon-an*, where the suffix denotes 'from', see note on *Arcades*, 3

loathéd = loathsome, hateful, the adjectival use of the past participle is frequent in Milton, and in Elizabethan English it conveyed meanings now generally expressed by adjectives with such terminations as *able*, *-some*, *-ful*, etc., see note on l 40. Contrast the epithet here applied to Melancholy with that used in *Il Penseroso*, 12

2 Having personified Melancholy, Milton turns to ancient mythology to find a parentage for her. He makes her the daughter of Night, for 'melancholy' means literally 'black bile,' that humour of the body which was formerly supposed to be the cause of low spirits, in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* we read "The night and darkness makes men sad, the like do all subterranean vaults, dark houses in caves and rocks, desert places cause melancholy in an instant." Melancholy being thus associated with darkness, it was natural that Milton should make her the offspring of 'blackest Midnight.' But in classical mythology (Nyx) Night is the wife of Erebus or Darkness, and their children are Æther (Sky) and Hemera (Day). Milton disregards this relationship, and rightly feels that he may alter the ancient tales to suit his own purpose, what can be more natural, therefore, than to justify the epithet 'loathéd' by making Melancholy the offspring of the loathsome monster Cerberus? To have derived her from Night and Darkness would merely have intensified the notion of blackness, and would not have implied anything necessarily abhorrent.

'Cerberus was the dog that guarded the gates of Hell, usually described as a monster with three heads, with the tail of a serpent, and with serpents round his neck

3. Stygian cave the den of Cerberus was on the further bank of the river Styx, at the spot where the spirits of the dead were landed by Charon. Virgil in *Aen* vi makes Charon say

"This is the place for the shadows, for Sleep and slumberous Night,  
The bodies of the living may not be ferried in my Stygian bark."

The Styx, literally 'the abhorred,' was the chief river of the lower world, around which it flowed seven times. To swear by Styx was regarded as the most solemn of oaths.

forlorn, desolate now used only as an adjective. This is the



past participle of the old verb *foircosen*, to lose utterly, the prefix *for* has an intensive force, as in *for swear*

4 'Mongst, common in poetry for 'amongst,' as 'midst' for 'amidst' 'A' is a prefix = in, and 'amongst' is literally 'in a crowd,' as 'amidst' is 'in the middle' The adverbs in *st*, as *amongst*, *amidst*, *whilst*, are derived from obsolete forms in *s*, as *amonges*, *amiddes*, *whiles*, which again come from the original adverbs *among*, *amid*, *while*.

horrid shapes, etc Burton, in *Anat of Mel*, associates 'terrors and affrights' with melancholy 'Shape' may be used here in the sense of Lat *umbra*, a mere shape or shadow, a departed spirit Comp *Il Pens* 6 'Unholy' = impure

5 some uncouth cell, i.e. some unknown and horrible abode Radically, 'uncouth' means 'unknown' A S *un*, not, and *cuth* the past participle of *cunnan*, to know Its secondary meaning is 'ungraceful' or 'ugly,' and in all the cases in which Milton uses this word it seems probable that he has taken advantage both of its prurvy and its later senses see *Lyc* 186, *Par Lost*, ii 827, v 93, vi 362 In early English 'couth' occurs as a present, a past, and a participle, and it still survives in the word 'could' and in the Scotch 'unco' = strange Similar changes of meaning have occurred to the words ' quaint,' 'barbarous,' 'outlandish,' etc, because that which is unfamiliar is apt to be regarded unfavourably

The word 'cell' is used in a similar connection in *Il Pens* 169

6 "Where Dirckness covers the whole place as with its wings" Dirckness is here personified, so that 'his' does not stand for 'its', on the other hand, if the word 'brooding' is to be taken literally, we should have expected 'her' to be used instead of 'his' The explanation probably is that Milton makes Darkness of the male sex, like the Lat *Erebus*, and that 'brooding' is not used literally, but = covering In the following passage the word seems to partake of both meanings —

"On the watery calm  
His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,  
And vital virtue infused"—*Par Lost*, vii 243

In Tennyson's *Two Voices* we have "brooding twilight" The primary sense of 'brood' is 'to sit upon in order to breed', hence a person is said to brood over his injuries when his desire is to obtain vengeance

jealous wings 'darkness is very properly associated with jealousy or suspicion,' and there may be also an allusion to the watchful care of the brooding fowl 'Jealous' and 'zealous' are radically the same

7 night-raven in *L'Allegro* night is associated with the raven, in *Il Pens* with the nightingale The raven was formerly

regarded as a bird of evil omen and of prophetic powers Shelley, in *Adonais*, speaks of the "obscure raven" In Marlowe's *Jenc of Malta* we read—

"Like the sad-presaging raven that tolls  
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak"

and in *Macbeth*, i 4—

"The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements"

sings, radically = *ring*, or resounds, applied by Milton to the strong notes of the raven, as by Shakespeare to the noise of a tempest. "We hear this fearful tempest *ring*," *Rich II* II 1 Comp 'rings,' L 114

S. There, *ic* in the "uncouth cell", an adverb depending on *dire*, line 10

ebon shades. shades as black as *ebony*, *ic* total darkness 'Ebon' is the adjectival form, spelt 'heben' in Spenser *Ebony* is a kind of wood so called on account of its hardness (Heb. *eben* = stone), and as it is usually black the name has come to be used as a synonym both for hardness and blackness

low-browed. overhanging or threatening comp *Il Pens* 35 A person with prominent-brow is called 'beetle browed,' *ic* 'with biting brows,' brows which project like an upper jaw.

9 ragged. Milton represents Melancholy with her hair dishevelled, and her fit abode amongst rugged and disordered rocks In the English Bible 'ragged' occurs in the sense of 'rugged' *Isaiah*, ii 21

10 In dark Cimmerian desert, *ic* in some desert shrouded in Cimmerian darkness "In the *Odyssey* the Cimmerians are a people dwelling beyond the ocean stream in a land of perpetual darkness, afterwards the name was given to a people in the region of the Black Sea (whence *Crimca*)" (Masson) The phrase "Cimmerian darkness" is common in English poetry, and Milton can hardly be accused of tautology in speaking of a "dark Cimmerian desert", he intensifies the notion of darkness

The student should note by what means, in the first ten lines of the poem, Milton creates so repugnant a picture of Melancholy that the reader turns with relief and delight to the representation of Mirth which follows these means are —

- 1 Accumulation of words conveying associations of horror, *eg* blackest Midnight, cave forlorn, shrieks, etc.
- 2 Imagery that intensifies the horror of the picture, *eg* Stygian cave, brooding Darkness etc.
- 3 Irregular metre, the rest of the poem being in octosyllabic couplets whose tripping sweetness pleases the ear after

the rougher cadence of lines 1 10 The separateness of these lines is further marked (both in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*) by the peculiar arrangement of the rhymes the formula is *abba c d d c c c*

11 fair and free both adjectives are frequently found together in English poetry to denote beauty and gracefulness in woman We find in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* "Of fayre young Venus, fresh and free", and the words occur in the same sense even before Chaucer's time Tennyson applies them to a man comp "Lord of Burleigh, fair and free"

12 yeleft, named past participle of the verb 'to clepe,' from A S *clifian*, to call In English the past participle of all verbs of the strong conjugation was originally formed by the suffix *en* and the prefix *ge* The suffix *en* has now disappeared in many cases and the prefix *ge* in all The *y* in 'yeleft' is a corruption of *ye*, as in *y*fallen, *y*founde, *y*go, *y*lent, *y*shape, *y*written, all of which are found in Chaucer The *y* also took the form *i* in Early English, as *i*makel, *i*spoken, *i*known, etc Shakespeare has *yeleft*, *yelud*, etc Milton in one case prefixes *y* to a present participle See note on *On Shakespeare*, 4

Euphrosyne (the light hearted one), one of the three Graces of classical mythology, the others being Aglaia (the bright one) and Thalia (the blooming one) They were represented as daughters of Zeus, and as the goddesses who purified and enhanced all the innocent pleasures of life Milton desires to signify their service to man more clearly by giving them another genealogy, he suggests two alternatives, and himself prefers the latter -(1) That they are the offspring of Venus (love) and Bacchus (good cheer), or (2) of Zephyr (the 'frolic wind') and Aurora (the goddess of the morning) From these parents Euphrosyne is begotten in the month of May, i.e. "it is the early freshness of the summer morning that best produces Cheerfulness" (Masson)

13 heart-easing Mirth Burton, in *Anat of Mel*, prescribes "Mirth and merry company" to ease the heart of the melancholy With 'heart easing' (compound of a participle preceded by its object) compare such adjectives as heart rending, tale bearing, soul stirring, etc

14 at a birth, at one birth the words 'a,' 'an,' and 'one' are all derived from the same Anglo Saxon word comp the phrase 'one at a time'

16 ivy crowned the ivy was sacred to Bacchus, the god of wine

17 There is a change in the construction here, there being no preceding 'whether' answering to 'whether' in this line the

meaning is, 'Whether lovely Venus bore thee, or whether the frolic wind, etc

some sager sing. i.e. some poets have more wisely written. Poets are often called 'singers,' but it is not known to what poets Milton can be referring probably he merely chose this way of modestly recommending his own view

18 frolic wind, i.e. frolicsome wind. The word 'frolic' is now used only as a noun and a verb, never as an adjective. Yet its original use in English is adjectival, and its form is that of an adjective—it is radically the same as the German *fröhlich*, so that *he* in *frolic* corresponds exactly to the suffix *ly* in *cleanly*, *ghastly*, etc. By the end of the seventeenth century it came to be used as a noun, and its attributive sense being forgotten, a new adjective was formed—*frolicsome*, from which again came a new noun—*frolicsomeness*. In *Comus* 39 it is used as an adjective "ripe and frolic."

breathes the spring this transitive use of the verb is frequent in Milton, with such objects as 'odours,' 'flowers,' 'smell,' etc

19 Zephyr, the personification of the pleasant West wind. In *Par. Lost*, v. 16, he is represented as wooing Flora—

"With voice

Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes"

20. 'As' here introduces a clause of time. 'Once' does not here denote 'on a single occasion' as opposed to the adverb 'often,' but 'at a former time,' as in the phrase 'once upon a time' (Lat. *olim*)

a Maying, enjoying the sports suitable to May. Comp. the song of Aurora, Zephyr and Flora in *The Penates* of Jonson—

"See, see, O see who here is come a maying!" etc

To which May answers

"All this and more than I have gift of saying  
May vows, so you will oft come here a-maying"

Also see *Song on May Morning*, 5

Even in ancient times there were May sports, when the Roman youth engaged in dancing and singing in honour of Flora, the goddess of fruits and flowers. Formerly throughout England the sports and customs connected with May-day were observed with the greatest zest

'A-Maying' = on Maying. In O.E. writers after the Norman Conquest the verbal noun with the preposition 'on' was used after verbs of motion, e.g. 'he went on hunting', afterwards *on* was corrupted into *a*. 'Maying' is, therefore, not a participle used as a noun, but the verbal noun or gerund. The participle originally ended in *ende* or *inde* and the noun in *ung*, but both now end in *ing*, and hence they are often confused

21 There, i.e. where Zephyr met Aurora an adverb modifying 'filled' The nom. to 'filled' is 'wind,' line 18

22 fresh blown is compounded of a participle and a simple adverb, 'fresh' being equal to 'freshly' the common adverbial suffix in Anglo Saxon was *e*, the omission of which has reduced many adverbs to the same form as the adjectives from which they were derived See note, *Il Pens* 66

roses washed in dew a similar phrase occurs in Shakespeare—

"I'll say she looks as clear  
As morning roses newly washed in dew"

*Taming of the Shrew*, ii 1 173

Comp. also—

"Her lips like roses overwasht with dew"—Greene, *Arcadia*

24 buxom, lively The spelling of this word disguises its origin it is *buck some*, which arose out of the A S *bocsum* or *buhsum* = 'easily bowed,' 'flexible' (A S *bujan*, to bow, and the suffix *sum*, 'like,' as in 'darksome,' etc.) So that the word first meant 'pliable,' then 'obedient,' then 'good humoured' or 'lively,' and finally 'handsome' It is now used ordinarily of the handsomeness of stout persons In its primary sense it was applied to unresisting substances, e.g. "the buxom air" (*Per. Lost*, II 342), and the transition to the sense of 'obedient' is a natural one comp. Spenser's *F* *Q* iii 4—

"For great compassion of their sorrow, bid  
His mighty waters to them *buxome* be"

In Shakespeare's *Per.* i 1 we find—

"A female hen  
So *buxom*, blithe, and full of face",

and Milton seems to have recollected this passage.

*debonair*, elegant, courteous this word, when broken up, is seen to be a French phrase—*de bon aire*, literally 'of a good mien or manner', *de* = of, *bon* is from Lat. *bonus*, good, and *aire* = manner Comp. the use of 'air' in the phrase 'to give one's self *airs*,' i.e. to be vain 'Debonair' has thus been formed out of three words by mere juxtaposition See note, *Il Pens* 32

25 Haste thee In such phrases the pronoun may be said to be used reflectively comp. 'sit thee down,' 'fare thee well' In Early English, however, the pronoun was in the *dative*, marking that the agent was affected by the action, but not that he was the *direct object* of it such a dative is called the *ethic dative* In Elizabethan writers the use of *thee* after verbs in the imperative is so common that in many cases its original sense seems to have been lost sight of, and the pronoun consequently seems to be a mere corruption of the nominative *thou*

25 Nymph, maiden the word denotes literally 'a bride' In Greek mythology the goddesses haunting mountains, woods, and streams were called nymphs. see line 36

bring here governs the following words —Jest, Jollity, quips, cranks, wiles, nods, becks, smiles, Sport, and Laughter, all of which are the names of Mirth's companions They are personifications of the attributes of happy youth

26 Jollity from the adjective 'jolly,' light hearted its original sense is 'festivity' It is not etymologically connected with 'joviality' (from Jove, the joyful planet), though its meaning is similar See note, Son 1 3

27 Quips sharp sayings, witty-jests Compare "This was a good *quip* that he gave unto the Jews" (*Latinus*) The word is radically connected with *whip* 'that which is moved smartly,' and a diminutive from it is *quibble*

cranks i. e. turns of wit 'Crank' is literally a crook or bend, hence the word is applied to an iron rod bent into a right angle as in machinery and to a form of speech in which words are twisted away from their ordinary meaning Shakespeare uses 'crank' in the sense of a winding passage, *Cor* 1 1 141, and (as a verb) = to wind about, 1 *Hen* IV 1 48, and Milton has, 'To show us the ways of the Lord, straight and faithful as they are, not full of *cranks* and contradictions' Whenever language is distorted or used equivocally we have a *crank* in the sense of the above passage

wanton wiles, playful tricks 'Wile' is really the same word as 'guile,' which in Earliest English was written 'gile' Compare *ward* and *guard*, *wise* and *guise*, *warden* and *guardian*, the forms in 'gu' were introduced into English by the Normans

28 Nods and becks, signs made with the head and the finger The word 'beck' is generally applied to signs made in either of these ways, though Milton here distinguishes them, it is a mere contraction of 'beckon,' to make a sign to, cognate with 'beacon'

wreathèd smiles, so called because, in the act of smiling or laughing, the features are wreathed or puckered A wreath is literally that which is 'writhed' or twisted. Compare 'wrinkled care,' l 31

29 This line and the next are attributive to 'smiles' 'Such' qualifies 'smiles' and the clause introduced by 'as' is relative As after *such* is generally regarded as a relative pronoun. Milton is fond of this construction, see lines 129, 138, 148

Hebe's cheek Hebe in classical mythology, was the goddess of youth, who waited upon the gods and filled their cups with nectar Later traditions represent her as a divinity who had power to restore youth to the aged Compare *Comus* 290 "As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips"

30 'And are wont to be found in sleek dimples' 'Dimple' is literally a little 'dip' or depression compare *dingle*, *dapple*, etc For 'sleek' = soft or smooth, see *Lyc* 99

31 We speak of Sport deriding or laughing away dull care compare *Proverbs*, xii 22, "A merry heart is a good medicine, but a broken spirit drieth up the bones" See Burton's *Anat of Mel*, where Care is said to be 'lean, withered, hollow-eyed, wrinkled,' etc

32 Laughter, here said to be holding his sides, just as, in popular language, excessive laughter is said to be 'side-splitting' 'Sport' and 'Laughter' are objects of the verb 'bring,' l 25

33 trip it 'to trip' is to move with short light steps as in dancing, 'it' is a cognate accusative, as if we said 'to trip a tripping,' and adds nothing to the meaning of the verb This use of 'it' is extremely common in Elizabethan writers, Shakespeare has to fight it, speak it, revel it, dance it, etc, where (as Abbott suggests) the pronoun seems to indicate some pre existing object in the mind of the person spoken of In other cases, such as queen it, foot it, saint it, sinner it, etc, the pronoun seems to be added to show that the words have the force of verbs

34 light fantastic toe the toe (or foot) is called 'fantastic' because in dancing its movements are unrestrained or 'full of fancy' 'Fantastic' is now used only in the sense of 'grotesque' or 'capricious,' but in the time of Shakespeare and Milton *fancy* and *fantasy* (which are radically the same word) had not been desynonymised this explains why an event that had merely been imagined or 'fancied' is described by Shakespeare as 'fantastic' 'To trip the light fantastic toe' is a phrase now ordinarily used as = 'to dance' Compare *Comus*, 144, 962 "light fantastic round"

36 Liberty is here naturally associated with Mirth in Burton's *Anat of Mel* there is a chapter on "Loss of liberty as a cause of Melancholy" She is here called a *mountain* nymph, because mountain fastnesses have always given to their possessors a certain amount of security against invasion and oppression, and because nowhere is the love of liberty more keen Comp Cowper's lines—

"'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower  
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,"

And Wordsworth—

"Two voices are there—one is of the sea,  
One of the *mountains*—each a mighty voice,  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen music, *Liberty*," etc

37 due see note on *Il Pens* 155

38 crew, formerly spelt cru, is common as a sea-term (being applied to the company of sailors on a ship), and, like many other sea-terms in English, is of Scandinavian origin. Its original sense is 'a company' and it is used here by Milton in this unrestricted sense. The word is common in his poems, but in every other case he uses it in a bad sense, applying it to evil spirits or hateful things. 'To admit of' is 'to make a member of'.

39 her, i.e. Liberty

40 unreproved pleasures free, free and innocent pleasures. This is a favourite arrangement of words in Milton—a noun between two adjectives—it generally implies that the final adjective qualifies the idea conveyed by the first adjective and noun together, comp. "hazel copses green," *Lyc* 42, also "native, wood-notes wild," l. 134. Unreproved = unprovable, comp. 'unvalued' for 'invaluable' in Milton's *Lines On Shakespeare*, ll. In Shakespeare we find 'unavoided' for 'unavoidable,' 'imagined' for 'imaginable,' 'unnumbered' for 'innumerable,' etc. (see Abbott's *Shak. Grammar*, § 375). The passive participle is often used to signify, not that which *was* and *is*, but that which *was* and therefore *can be hereafter*. In much the same way we still speak of 'an untamed steed,' 'an unconquered army,' 'a dreaded sound'. See also note, *Lyc* 176.

41 To hear, like 'to live' in l. 38, is an infinitive of purpose dependent upon the verb 'admit'.

42 startle is an infin. dependent, along with 'begin,' upon 'to hear'. Waiton notes that there is a peculiar propriety in 'startle,' the lark's is a sudden shrill burst of song, which is often heard just before sunrise and may therefore be said to scare away the darkness. Comp. *Par. Reg.* ii. 279.

43 watch-tower the lark sings high up in the air, so high that, though it may be filling one's ears with its melody, it is often impossible to see the songster. Hence Shakespeare speaks of it as singing "at heaven's gate," and Shelley likens it to a "high-born maiden in a palace tower."

44 dappled, i.e. having the sky covered with small grey clouds. Literally, it means 'marked with small dips' or hollows, it has no connection with *dab*. See note on l. 30. 'Till' here introduces a clause in the indicative, in line 99 the verb is in the subjunctive mood. See note on *Il Pens.* 44.

45 Then to come, etc. dependent, like 'startle,' upon the verb 'to hear' in l. 41. It refers to the lark which is, at day-break, to appear at L'Allegro's window to bid him good morning. This is a fancy frequent in poetry—that the morning song of birds is a friendly greeting to those who hear them. The only difficulties connected with this interpretation are (1) that in making the lark alight at the window of a human dwelling Milton seems



to be forgetful of a lark's habits, the ordinary poetical conceit does not apply to this bird, which does not seek man's company, and is a "bird of the wilderness" (2) that the verb 'hear' is usually followed by an infinitive without 'to', whereas in this case 'to come' is used. These difficulties disappear if we remember that Milton's references to nature are not always strictly accurate (see notes p. 184m), and that 'to come' follows at some distance from 'hear,' thus rendering the introduction of 'to' necessary as a sign of the infinitive.

Prof. Masson, however, rejects this view as nonsense. He says: "The words '*Then to come*' in line 45 refer back to, and depend upon, the previous words '*Worth, admit me*' of line 38. On this view, it is not the lark, but L'Allegro himself, that comes to his own window and bids his friends good morning. This avoids the two difficulties above noticed, but raises others. The question is referred to here merely because, in order to appreciate the arguments the student must thoroughly master the syntax of lines 37-45."

45 in spite of sorrow, i.e. in order to spite or defy sorrow. 'Spite' is a contracted form of 'despite,' and is cognate with 'despise.' This is a peculiar use of the phrase 'in spite of', ordinarily, when a person is said to do something in spite of sorrow it is implied that he did it *although he was sorrowful*. This is obviously not the meaning in this passage, for there is no sorrow in the heart of the lark (or of L'Allegro himself).

46 bid see note on *Lyc* 22.

47 sweet-briar (also spelt brier), a prickly and fragrant shrub, the wild rose or eglantine.

48 twisted eglantine. Etymologically 'eglantine' denotes something prickly (*Tr. aiguille*, a needle), but since Milton has just named the sweet briar, which is commonly identified with the eglantine, and calls the eglantine 'twisted' (which it is not), it is probable that he meant the honeysuckle. 'Twisted' may properly be applied to creeping or climbing plants.

49 cock. The crowing of the cock is universally associated with the dawn, hence Milton speaks of this bird as scattering the last remnants of darkness by his crowing. So in Shakespeare we have a reference to the superstition that spirits vanished at cock-crow. In classical times the cock was sacred to Apollo, the god of the sun, because it announced sunrise. Comp. the Eastern proverb, used to a person to intimate that the speaker can dispense with his services—"Do you think there will be no dawn if there is no cock?"

The adjective 'thin' may be taken as qualifying 'rear'—so we speak of the thin or straggling rear of an army as distinct from its close and serried van.

52 Stoutly struts his dames before, walks with conscious pride in front of the hens. In Latin we find the cock described as the *gallus morosus*, pugnacious fowl. Cowper speaks of the 'wonted strut' of the cock. 'Before,' in this line is a preposition governing 'dames.' 'dame' is from Lat. *domina*, a lady.

The bold step of the cock is well expressed by the rhythm of this line in contrast with that of the preceding one.

53 listening. this word refers to *L'Allegro* himself. it introduces another of his 'unreproved pleasures' of the morning. The word 'oft' shows that the poet is not recounting the pleasures of one particular morning, but morning pleasures in general.

54. 'The sounds made by the barking hounds and the huntsman's horn joyfully awaken the morning.' Similarly in Gray's *Elegy* the cock-crow and the "echoing horn" are both referred to as morning sounds. Gray was (as Lowell notes) greatly influenced by a study of Milton's poetry.

cheerily, cheerily or cheerfully. in the phrase 'be of good cheer,' we see the primary sense of the word 'cheer,' which is from a French word meaning 'the face.' A bright face is the index of a cheerful spirit.

55 hoar. This may imply that the hill appears gray through the haze of distance, or more literally, that it is white with frost or rime, the hunters being astir before the rising sun has melted the frozen dew (*hoar-frost*). In *Line 95* Milton applies 'hoar' to a mountain in the more usual sense of 'old' comp. 'hoary headed'.

56 high wood, because on the side of a hill. 'Echoing' here qualifies 'hounds and horn'.

shrill. In modern English the use of adjectival forms as adverbs is common, in many cases they represent the old adverb ending in *-e* (see note on l. 22). It must not be supposed, however, that wherever an adjective is used with a verb its force is that of an adverb. e.g. "through the high wood echoing *shrill*," or "Hope springs *eternal* in the human breast." Here it is not correct to say that 'shrill' merely means 'shrilly,' and 'eternal' means 'eternally', the adjectives have a distinct use in pointing to a quality of the agent rather than of the act.

57 Sometime, i.e. 'for some time,' or 'at one time or other.' The genitive form 'sometimes' has a different meaning = occasionally.

not unseen. see *Analysis* and note *Il Pens* 65. "Happy men love witnesses of their joy, the splenetic love solitude." Burton, in *Anat. of Mel*, says of the melancholy "They delight in floods and waters, desert places, to walk alone in orchards, gardens, private walks, etc."

58 elms Warton notes that the elm seems to have been Milton's favourite tree, judging from its frequent mention both in his Latin and English poems. The scenery in the neighbourhood of Horton may account for this, though it must not be supposed that Milton is in this poem describing any actual scene. Masson says "A visit to Horton any summer's day to stroll among the meadows and pollards by the banks of the sluggish Colne, where Milton must have so often walked and mused, may be recommended to lovers of Literature and of English History."

59 This line is dependent on 'walking'. 'right' is an adverb modifying the preposition 'against'. Comp. 'He cut *right* through the enemy,' 'I have got *half* through my work,' etc. 'Against' implies that L'Allegro is walking with his face turned directly to the rising sun.

the eastern gate, a favourite image in poetry for that part of the sky from which the sun seems to issue. In classical mythology the god of the sun was represented as riding in a chariot through the heavens from East to West, and in one of his Latin poems (*Eleg* III) Milton represents the sun as the 'light bringing' king, whose home is on the shores of the Ganges (i.e. in the far East). Comp. "Hark, hark! the lark at Heaven's gate sings," *Cymbeline* II. III.

60 begins his state, begins his stately march towards his 'other goal' in the west. Comp. *Arc* 81, note.

61 amber light, amber coloured light noun used as adjective

62 'The clouds (being) arrayed in numerous colours'. Grammatically, 'clouds' is here used absolutely. In Latin a noun or pronoun in the ablative along with a participle was often used as a substitute for a subordinate clause, and Milton is fond of this construction. Here, line 62 is an adverbial clause modifying 'begins'. In English, the noun is generally said to be the nominative absolute, but in the case of pronouns, the form shows whether the nom. or obj. is used. Milton uses both, comp. "Him destroyed, for whom all this was made" and "Adam shall live with her, I extinct". Modern writers prefer the nom. case both for nouns and pronouns. In Anglo-Saxon the dative was used.

liveries here refers to dress, as when we speak of a servant's livery. Its primary sense was more general—anything *delivered* or served out, whether clothes, food, or money. A peer was even said to have *livery* of his feudal holdings from the king. As the livery of a servant is generally of some distinctive colour, Milton applies the word to the many-hued clouds. It may also imply that the clouds, as servants, attend their master, the Sun, in his stately march.

62. *light* also includes *de* words: *verged comp // Pens* 159. It is a short form of *distend*, from the verb 'to distend' (A.S. *distēan*, to stretch out), which, as Milton remarks, still survives in the Scotch word *distend* to wipe or clean.

63. *Light* is a verb and 156.

64. tells his tale: counts his sheep in order to find if any have been sleeping during the night. 'Tale' is thus used in the sense of 'tale' (A.S. *teallan* to tell, counted, when was one of its meanings in Early Eng. A.S. *teol*, a number. In the Bible 'tell' and 'tale' are frequently used in this sense, *Gen* xv 5, *Psa* cxxi 17, *Luk* i 18, and in the works of writers nearly contemporary with Milton the words are used of the counting of sheep.

'To tell a tale' may also mean 'to relate a story,' and the story would may be supposed to sit and amuse themselves with a tale. But as Milton in the previous line refers to other tales as persons as are suited to the early morning and night, its early morning as well as in some ordinary duty it seems likely that in this line also some piece of business is meant, and not a pastime. The morning hours are not usually suited to story telling.

65. *Straight* straight is, immediately. "There is, in my opinion, great beauty in this abrupt and capricious start of the poet's imagination, as it is extremely well adapted to the subject, and carries a very pretty allusion to those sudden gleams of intellectual light which break in upon the mind at the sight of a fine prospect" (Thyrs). See note, *Line Carrier*, n 10.

66. While it (i.e. the eye) measures the landscape round, sweeps over the surrounding scene. Landscape spelt by Milton *landshap* which resembles the A.S. form *landscype* = 'land-shape' the aspect or general appearance of the country. The word is borrowed from the Dutch painters, who applied it to what we now call the *background* of a picture. 'Scape' is radically the same as the suffix *ship*, seen in *ladyship*, *worship*, *friendship* etc., where it serves to form abstract nouns. 'Round' is an adverb modifying *measures*, 'around'.

67. Rustet lawns, and fallows grey. 'lawn' is always used by Milton to denote an open stretch of grassy ground, whereas in modern usage it is applied to a smooth piece of grass grown land in front of a house. The origin of the word is disputed, but it seems radically to denote 'a clear space', it is said to be cognate with *lan* used as a prefix in the names of certain Welsh towns, e.g. *Llanidlo*, *Llangollen*. *Comp* *Luc* 2, 'Fallow' literally denotes 'pale coloured,' e.g. tawny or yellow hence applied to land ploughed but not bearing a crop, as it is generally of a tawny colour and finally to all land that has been

long left unsown and is therefore grass-grown It is in this last sense that Milton uses it, and as the word has lost all significance of colour (when applied to land) he adds the adjective 'grey' to distinguish it from those fields that are 'russet' or reddish-brown the former are more distant, the latter nearer at hand See note l 55

72. stray comp Lat *errare*, to wander

73 Mountains along with 'lawns,' 'fallows,' 'meadows,' 'brooks,' and 'rivers,' is in apposition to 'new pleasures,' l 69

74 labouring clouds, so called because they bring forth rain and storms The image of clouds resting on the mountain-top is well expressed by Shelley —

"I sift the snow on the mountains below,  
And their great pines groan aghast,  
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,  
While I sleep in the arms of the blast"

*The Cloud*

75 trim comp 'trim gardens,' *Il Pens* 50, 'daisies trim,' *Com* 120 The student should note the prevailing position of the adjectives in lines 71, 73, 76, 126, etc Where contrast is intended, as in line 76, the two nouns are placed together and the adjectives apart, so in Latin frequently

*pie'd* variegated The word literally means 'variegated like a *magine*', it is a common epithet in poetry and is applied by Shakespeare to daisies (*L L L v u*) It is therefore probable that in this passage also '*pie'd*' qualifies 'daisies'; otherwise it might be taken as an attribute of 'meadows.' Comp *pu-bald*, applied to animals

77 Towers and battlements (*i.e.* the eye) sees This thought may have been suggested to Milton by the fact that his eye, in taking in the landscape around Horton, would often light on the towers of Windsor Castle in the distance comp *Com* 135

78 Bosomed, embosomed

79 Where perhaps some beautiful lady dwells, a centre of attraction Lines 79 and 80 form an attributive adjunct to 'towers and battlements'

beauty see note on *Lyc* 166

*lies*=dwells, comp *Lyc* 53, and Shakespeare, 'When the court *lay* at Windsor' (*M W of W* u 2)

80 cynosure, now applied generally to an object of great interest so called because the Cynosura, the stars composing the tail of the constellation of the Lesser Bear, was the mark by which the Phœnician sailors steered their course at sea 'Cynosure' is from the Greek *kyon* *oyra*, a dog's tail comp *Com* 342 "Tyrian Cynosure." A star by which sailors steer is also

called a 'lode star,' a word which is used metaphorically in the same way as 'cynosure', comp "Your eyes are *lode-stars*," *M N D* 1 1

neighbouring 'neighbour' is radically 'near-dweller' (A S *neah-bū*)

81 Hard by, near at hand 'by' = alongside, an adverb modifying 'smokes', 'hard' is an adverb of degree modifying 'by' Comp the sense of 'by' in the phrases *close by*, *fast by*, *to put a thing by* (i.e. aside)

82 From a preposition may, as here, govern an adverbial phrase

83 Where, in which cottage Corydon, Thyrsis, Thestylis occur frequently in pastoral poetry as the names of shepherds, and Phyllis as the name of a female See Virgil's *Bucolics*, Theocritus, Spenser, etc

met 'having met together, they are seated at their savoury dinner of herbs and other country dishes'

85 messes, dishes of food 'Mess' originally meant something placed on a table (Lat *missum*) the word here has no connection with 'mess,' a disordered mixture, which is a variant of *mask*

86 neat-handed 'neat' is a kind of transferred epithet, referring not to the woman's hands but to the appearance of the food prepared by her So a skilful carpenter may be called 'neat-handed,' a good needlewoman 'neat fingered,' etc

97 bower, here refers to the cottage A 'bower' is strictly something built, a dwelling-place it came to be applied to the inner chamber occupied by a lady

With Thestylis 'with' here means 'in company with,' a woman being generally employed at harvest time to assist in binding the corn into sheaves

89 Or The construction is 'Either she leaves her bower to bind the sheaves, or (she goes) to the tanned haycock' This is evidently the meaning, 'she goes' being implied in the previous verb 'leaves' This construction, by which two nouns or phrases are connected with one verb which really suits only one of them, is common in Milton, and is called *zeugma*

earlier season, because the hay-harvest is earlier than the grain-harvest

90 tanned haycock, a pile of dried hay The word 'cock' (by itself) means a 'small pile of hay' it is radically distinct from the word 'cock' in any other sense

mead, meadow The form in *our* (comp arrow, sparrow, marrow, sorrow) is due to an A S suffix *-we*

91 *secure*, free from care, not fearing harm. This is the primary sense of the word [Lat *se* (for *sine*) = free from, *cura* = care] it therefore corresponds exactly to the English word 'care-less'. It is used in this sense in the Bible and in such passages as—

"Man may *securely* sin, but *safely* never"

In Latin *securus* is sometimes applied to that which frees from care. In modern English 'secure' means 'safe,' *actually* free from danger.

92 "Milton again notes a paragraph in the poem, changing the scene. It is now past mid day and into the afternoon, and we are invited to a rustic holiday among the 'upland hamlets or little villages among the slopes' (Masson)

*upland hamlets* as the poet here introduces us to the primitive amusements and superstitions of village life we may take 'upland' to mean 'far removed from large cities'. The word 'uplandish' was formerly used in the sense of 'rude' or 'unrefined,' because, in the uplands, the refinements of town life were unknown. Comp. note on l. 5 'Hamlet' = ham-let, a little *home* (A S *ham*) comp. the affix in the names of certain towns—Nottingham, Birmingham, etc.

*invite* the object of this verb is not expressed

94. *jocund*, merry from the Lat *jucundus*, pleasant. (It has no radical connection with the words *joke*, *jocular*, as is sometimes stated.)

*rebecks* The rebeck was a three stringed fiddle, played with a bow. The name is the same as the Persian *rabab*, applied to a two stringed instrument said to have been introduced into Europe by the Moors. The modern violin has four strings.

95 *many a youth*. 'Youth' = young-th, the state of being young, it is now used both in its abstract and concrete senses in the latter it applies properly, as here, to a young man.

'Many a' is a peculiar idiom, which has been explained variously. One theory is that 'many' is a corruption of the French *mesme*, a train or company, and 'a' a corruption of the preposition 'of,' the singular noun being then substituted for the plural through confusion of the preposition with the article. A more correct view seems to be that 'many' is the A S *manig*, which was in old English used with a singular noun and without the article, e.g. *manig mann* = many men. In the thirteenth century the indefinite article began to be inserted thus *many enne thing* = 'many a thing,' just as we say 'what a thing,' 'such a thing'. This would imply that 'a' is not a corruption of 'of,' and that there is no connection with the French word *mesme*.

96 chequered shade The meaning may be illustrated by a passage from Shakespeare—

“The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind,  
And make a chequered shadow on the ground”

*Titus Andronicus* II 4

Comp “a shadow-chequer'd lawn,” Tennyson's *Recoll of Arabian Nights*

The radical meaning of ‘chequered’ or ‘checkered’ is ‘marked with squares’ (like a chess-board), hence it is here applied to the ground marked in dark and light. The game of draughts which is played on a chess-board is sometimes called ‘checkers’. The word ‘check’ is derived through the French, from the Persian *shah*, a king, the name given to the principal piece on the chess board. ‘chess’ is merely a corruption of the plural ‘checks’.

97 ‘And (to) young and old (who have) come forth to play’ ‘Come’ is the past participle agreeing with ‘young and old’.

to play infinitive of purpose after a verb of motion, in early English the *gerund* was used, preceded by the preposition *to*

98 sunshine holiday comp Com 959 ‘Sunshine’ is a noun used as an adjective. Milton wrote ‘holyday,’ which shows the origin of the word. The accent in such compounds (comp blue bell, blackbird, etc.) falls on the adjective, it is only in this way that the ear can tell whether the compounds (e.g. *hólday*) or the separate words (e.g. *hóly day*) are being used.

99 livelong, longlasting see *On Shakespeare*, 8, note. For ‘fail,’ the subjunctive after ‘till,’ compare l. 44.

100 We have here to supply a verb of motion before ‘to,’ e.g. ‘they proceed’ comp lines 90 and 131.

spicy nut-brown ale, a drink composed of hot ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast, and roasted crabs or apples. It was called *Lamb's wool* from its frothy appearance, and Shakespeare refers to it as “*gossip's bowl*,” while another Elizabethan writer calls it “the spiced wassel bowl.”

101 feat, exploit, wonderful deed ‘Feat,’ like ‘fact,’ is radically “something done” (*Lät factum*). For ‘many a,’ see l. 95.

102 Faery Mab Mab was the fairy who sent dreams, and hence a person subject to dreams is said to be ‘favoured with the visits of queen Mab’. See an account of her powers in this respect in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. Ben Jonson alludes to the liking of the fairies for cream —



"When about the *cream bowls* sweet  
 You and all your elves do meet  
 This is *Mab*, the mistress-fairy,  
 That doth nightly rob the dairy  
 She that *pinches* country wenches,  
 If they scrub not clean their benches'

Milton's spelling 'faery' comes nearer to the early English word 'faerie,' which meant 'enchantment'

junkets, also spelt *juncates* The original sense is 'a kind of cream-cheese served up on rushes' (Ital *grunco*, a rush) it was then applied to various kinds of delicacies made of cream, then to any delicacy, and finally to a 'merrymaking' Hence the verb 'to junket,' i.e. to revel Milton here means 'dainties'

eat here past tense = ate

103 She he, etc One of the girls tells how she was pinched in her sleep by the fairies (the popular superstition being that only lazy servants were treated in this way), and then a young man tells his experience at one time he was led astray by the *ignis fatuus*, and at another time he had suffered from the tricks of Robin Goodfellow

104 The construction is awkward we may read either (1) 'And he (was) led by Friar's lantern, (he) tells how' etc, or (2) 'And he, (having been) led by Friar's lantern, tells how' etc The former reading is preferable as it separates the two stories regarding the 'Friar's lantern' and the 'drudging goblin,' but it leaves the verb 'tells' without a subject This, however, occasionally happens in Milton The other reading is grammatically easy, but confuses the two stories A third suggestion is to read *Tales* for *Tells* in line 105, putting a colon at *led*

Friar's lantern This refers to the flickering light often seen above marshy ground and liable to be mistaken by the belated traveller for the light of a lamp It is popularly called Jack o' lantern or Will o' the Wisp This explains Milton's use of the word 'lantern,' but it does not explain why he should call it 'Friar's' lantern He may refer to a spirit popularly called Friar Rush, who, however, neither haunted fields nor carried a lantern, but played pranks in houses during the night, he is therefore distinct from Jack o' lantern 'Friar' is a member of a religious order (Lat *frater*, Fr *frère*, a brother)

105 drudging goblin sometimes called Robin Goodfellow or Hobgoblin (or Puck as in Shakespeare) Comp *Anat of Mel I* 11 'A bigger kind there is of them (i.e. terrestrial demons) called with us *hobgoblins* and Robin Goodfellows, that would in those superstitious times grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of *drudgery* work, to draw water, dress meat,

or any such thing' It is to be noted that the individuality of these familiar spirits is often not very clear Milton confuses Jack o' lantern and Friar Rush, while keeping Robin Goodfellow distinct, Shakespeare does not distinguish Robin Goodfellow, Jack o' lantern, and Puck (see *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II 1), while Burton makes Robin Goodfellow a house spirit and speaks of men being "led round about a heath with a Puck in the night. Scott makes the same mistake as Milton and Ben Jonson in *The Sad Shepherd* introduces 'Puck-hairy' or 'Robin Goodfellow,' a hound See note on *Il Pens* 93

'To drudge' is to perform hard and numble work 'Goblin,' a supernatural being, generally represented as of small size but great strength, sometimes mischievous, sometimes kindly disposed. In the form *hob-goblin* 'hob' is a corruption of Robin, hence Robin Goodfellow and Hobgoblin are the same

105 sweat, here past tense of a strong verb (O E *swat* or *swot*), it is now treated as a weak verb, and the past tense is *sweated*. Comp. such weak verbs as creep, leap, quake, swell, wash, weep, of which the old preterites were *crop*, *leep*, *quoke*, *swal*, *wesh* *wep*

106 To earn infin. of purpose

duly set, i.e. placed as the goblin's *due* 'set' qualifies 'cream-bowl'

107 ere comp l 114 and *Lyc.* 25 'Ere' = before, now used only as a conjunction or preposition. in A.S. *ær* was an adverb as well, and not a comparative but a positive form = soon.

108 shadowy flail, being wielded by a spirit, the flail is here called 'shadowy' = invisible 'Flail' is from Lat *flagellum*, a scourge.

bath Milton always used this older inflexion, and never the form *has*

109 end The goblin performed in one night a task that ten labourers working a whole day could not have completed, end = complete Notice that 'end' and 'fiend' (pron. *fend*) here rhyme together

110 Then the lubber fiend lies (him) down Comp 'haste thee,' l 25 and note, 'him' is here reflective.

lubber fiend 'lubber' is generally applied to a big clumsy fellow, whereas Robin Goodfellow was a small and active fairy, who could scarcely be "stretched out all the chimney's length" Milton may have referred to 'Lob-he-by-the-fire, the giant son of a witch mentioned in Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* Shakespeare calls Puck a 'lob of spirits'

111 chimney's length, i.e. the width of the fireplace or hearth 'Chimney' in the sense of fireplace is obsolete except in

compounds, *e.g.* chimney piece, chimney corner It now means 'flue' or passage for smoke; as such passages did not exist in Roman houses, the Lat *caminus* (from which chimney is derived) meant a furnace, brazier, or fireplace

112 Basks strength 'To bask' is to 'lie exposed to a pleasant warmth' The word is here used transitively, its object being 'strength,' and its meaning 'to expose to warmth'

hairy an epithet transferred from the person to an attendant circumstance, comp 'dimpled mirth,' 'wrinkled care,' 'pale fear,' 'gaunt hunger' Ben Jonson speaks of Puck as being hairy, and strength is often associated with abundant growth of hair see *Samson Agonistes*, *passim*

113 crop full, with well filled stomach The 'crop' is the first stomach of fowls.

flings, *i.e.* flings himself, darts This verb is one of a number that may be used reflectively without having the reflexive pronoun expressed comp 'he pushed into the room,' 'he has changed very much,' etc

114 first cock, because one cock sets the others a-crowning

matin, morning call (Fr *matin*, morning), comp *Par. Lost*, v 7, "The shrill matin song of birds on every bough" In *Par. Lost*, v 526, it occurs as an adjective, and in *Hamlet* Shakespeare uses it as a noun=morning "The glow-worm shows the *matin* to be near" The word *matins* is now used for morning prayers

115 Thus done the tales Absolute construction (as in l 62) =The tales (being) thus done, they (*i.e.* the villagers) creep to bed

116 lulled=being lulled, attributive to 'they'

117 Towered cities then 'Then' does not here denote 'afterwards' as it does in line 100, it marks a transition from mirth in the country to mirth in the city, and the poet now recounts the entertainments of city life, as L'Allegro might read, of them in romances and tales of chivalry This explains the allusions to 'throngs of knights,' contests of 'wit or arms,' 'antique pageantry,' etc These are not the events of one day except in the sense that L'Allegro might, on his return from the village rejoicings, retire to his own room to read about them

'Towered,' having towers (Lat *turrita*, an epithet which Milton himself applied to London in one of his Latin Elegies) Comp *Arc* 21 There is no doubt that the poet, during his stay at Horton, paid occasional visits to London, and Warton infers from expressions in the first Elegy that he had in his youth enjoyed the theatre

118 hum, nominative, along with 'cities,' to 'please'

119 knights and barons it is interesting to note the original meaning of these and other words that are now titles of rank 'Knight' = A S *cnicht*, a youth, 'baron' meant at first no more than 'man' or 'husband', 'duke' = Lat *dux*, a 'leader', 'count' is really Lat *comes*, a companion, and 'earl' is Old Saxon *crl*, a man

120 weeds, garments Comp the use of the word by Shakespeare—

"I have a woman's longing  
To see great Hector in his *weeds of peace*"

*Tr and Cres* iii 3

'Weeds of peace' denotes the ordinary dress as opposed to 'weeds of war,' i.e. armour, etc The use of the word is now generally confined to the phrase 'a widow's weeds,' i.e. a widow's mourning dress Comp *Comus*, 16. 189, 390

high triumphs, grand public entertainments, such as masques, pageants, processions, tournaments, etc Comp *Sams Agon* 1312 and Bacon's *Essay Of Masques and Triumphs* Such exhibitions were extremely popular from the time of Henry VIII to Charles I See *Arcades*, introductory note

121 store of ladies, many ladies The word 'store' is found in this sense in Sidney, Spenser, and others It is now applied only to inanimate objects to denote abundance

122 Rain, pour forth 'To rain' in the sense of 'to pour forth in abundance' is a common expression comp 'to stream,' 'to shower,' 'to overflow'

Influence This word is now chiefly used in the sense of 'power' or 'authority,' but a trace of its original meaning still remains in such phrases as 'magnetic influence,' 'the influence (i.e. inspiration) of the Spirit' Its literal meaning is *a flowing in* (Lat *in*, and *fluere*, to flow), and in this sense it was used in astrology to denote "a flowing in, an *influent* course of the planets, their virtue being infused into, or their course working on, inferior creatures" This was originally the only meaning of the word, and in this sense Milton and Shakespeare employ it in this passage it implies that the bright eyes of the ladies were like the stars in 'working on' those upon whom their glances fell *In Gen*

Burton, in *Anat of Mel*, says 'Primary causes are the heavens, planets, stars, etc, by their *influence* (as our astrologers hold) producing this and such like effects' It is well to remember how strong a hold the belief in astrology had (and still has) on the human mind, up to the end of the eighteenth century the almanacs in common use in England were full of astrological rules and theories, and even an astronomer like

Kepler was not entirely free from belief in such matters. It is not surprising, therefore, that the science of astrology has left its traces on the language in such words as 'influence,' 'disastrous,' 'ill starred,' 'ascendency,' etc. Comp notes on *Arc* 52, *Il Pens* 24

judge the prize, adjudge or award the prize. We may take 'eyes' as nominative to both of the verbs 'rain' and 'judge,' the ladies showing by their eyes whom they regard as the victor. But Milton occasionally connects two verbs rather loosely with one noun, just as he, on the other hand, makes one verb refer by zeugma to two nouns in different senses. We may therefore read, 'who judge,' the relative being implied in 'whose,' l 121. Comp *Il Pens* 155, *Lyc* 89

123 Of wit or arms comp 'gowns, not arms,' *Son* xvi. The contests of wit in which ladies were the judges may be those 'Courts of Love' which were so popular in France until the end of the fourteenth century and had so great an influence on the poetical literature both of France and England. The contests of arms may refer to those tournaments in which mounted knights fought to show their skill in arms, the victor generally receiving his prize at the hands of some fair lady. Comp *Il Pens* 118

124 her grace whom, i.e. the grace of her whom. The relative pronoun here relates, not to the noun preceding it, but to the substantive implied in the possessive pronoun. His, her, etc. being genitives = of him, of her, etc., they have here their full force as pronouns, and are not pronominal adjectives (as they are sometimes called). The same idiom is found in Latin, e.g. *mea scripta timentis*, 'my writings who (I) fear' = the writings of me who am in fear. Comp *Arc* 75 *Son* xviii 6. Grace = favour

125 Hymen in saffron robe. Hymen, being the god of marriage, Milton here refers to elaborate marriage festivities which often included masques and other spectacles. comp Ben Jonson's *Hymenaei*, where Hymen enters upon the stage 'in a saffron coloured robe, his under vestures white, his socks yellow, a yellow veil of silk on his left arm, his head crowned with roses and marjoram, in his right hand a torch of pine tree'. Comp Milton's fifth Elegy, 105

Exulting youths the Hymeneal sing,  
With Hymen's name, roofs, rocks, and valleys ring,  
He, new attired, and by the season drest  
Proceeds, all fragrant, in his saffron vest

(Cowper's translation)

In works of art, Hymen is represented as a youth bearing a torch. Milton uses 'taper,' now restricted to a small wax-

candle. from this use we get the adjectives 'taper' = taper like, long and slender, and 'tapering'. The radical sense of 'taper' is 'that which glows or shines.'

125 appear after the verb *let* the simple infinitive without *to* is used. *let Hymen (to) appear*

127 pomp and feast and revelry these words depend upon the verb 'let'. Milton here used the word 'pomp' in its classical sense (Greek *pompē*) = an unpoising procession. Comp *Sams Agor.* 1312 and note on l 120

128 mask see introductory note on *Arctades*

antique pageantry, representations or emblematic spectacles in which mythological characters were largely introduced. 'Pageantry' is an interesting word. The suffix *-y* has a collective or comprehensive force (which has gained in some cases an abstract sense) as in cavalry, infantry, poetry, etc. *Pageant* meant (1) a movable platform, then (2) a platform on which plays were exhibited, hence (3) the play itself, and (as the plays first exhibited in this way made large use of spectacular effect) (4) a spectacle, *let* or show.

'Antique, belonging to earlier times (Lat *antiquus* also spelt *anticus*). This word has gone through changes of meaning similar to those of the word 'uncouth' (see l 5), viz (1) old, (2) old fashioned or out of date, and hence (3) fantastic there is, however, this difference—that while 'uncouth' has had all three senses, 'antique' has had only the two first, the third being taken by the form 'antic'

129 Such sights, etc. These words stand in apposition to 'pomp', 'feast' etc. Some suppose that Milton here refers to the early works of Ben Jonson, who was a prolific writer of masques. But surely they have a deeper significance, they imply that the imagery of the poem is not that of mere recollection, but the product of a youthful nature, full of joyous emotion, and affected by circumstances of time and place. A youthful poet, a haunted stream, and a summer evening form a combination that does not lead to mere description.

131 Then to the well trod stage, *sc* 'let me go' this means that L'Allegro turns from the stories of chivalry to the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson. comp note l 117. By calling the stage 'well trod' Milton may hint at the abundance of dramatic literature.

anon, soon after (A S *on an*, in one moment) an adverb modifying the verb of motion understood.

132 Jonson's learned sock. Ben Jonson (1574-1637) was alive when Milton paid him this compliment. There is no doubt that Milton must have admired Jonson for his classical learning and for his lofty sense of the poet's task. He calls him 'learned' on

account of the profuse display of classical knowledge and dramatic art in his comedies and masques. On this point he is often contrasted with Shakespeare. Hazlitt says "Shakespeare gives fair play to nature and his own genius, while the other fronts almost entirely to imitation and custom. Shakespeare takes his groundwork in individual character and the manners of his age, and raises from them a fantastical and delightful superstructure of his own, the other takes the same groundwork in matter-of-fact, but hardly ever rises above it." Fuller compares Jonson to a Spanish galleon and Shakespeare to an English man of war. "Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, like the latter, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

sock here used as emblematic of comedy in general as 'buskin' is used of tragedy (comp. *II P. n.* 102). The sock (Lat. *sockus*) was a kind of low slipper worn by actors in the comedies of ancient Rome. 'Sock' here cleverly refers to Jonson's liking for the classical drama. It was, less fittingly, used by Jonson himself of Shakespeare.

133 Or (if) sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child, etc. Milton speaks of Shakespeare with reference only to his comedies and to that aspect of them that would appeal most vividly to the cheerful man. A comedy like *Measure for Measure* could hardly be adequately characterised as 'native wood notes wild,' but such a comedy would no more accord with the mood of L'Allegro than the tragedy of *Hamlet*. Milton's language here is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that he is contrasting Shakespeare as master of the romantic drama with Jonson as master of the classical drama that he is paying a tribute to his striking natural genius ('native wood notes') and that he regards him as indeed a poet, being 'of imagination all compact' ('Fancy's child'). L'Allegro cannot be expected to use the language of the lines *On Shakespeare* he represents a special mood of the human spirit, a mood with which Milton is not so fully in sympathy as that of *Il Penseroso*. 'Fancy' (Phantasy) is here used in a less restricted sense than now. We would now use 'Imagination'. The student should note the pleasing rhythm and alliteration of lines 133, 134.

135 against eating cares, to ward off gnawing anxiety. It is a common figure to speak of care or sorrow eating into the heart as rust corrodes iron. Comp. Lat. *curas edaces*, Horace, *Odes*, II, 11, *mordaces sollicitudines*, *Odes*, I, 18. The preposition 'against, from the notion of counteraction implied in it, has a variety of uses comp. 'he fought against (in opposition to) the enemy', 'he toiled against (in provision for) my return'.

136 Milton now refers to the delights of music, and it is well to notice how he 'marries' the sound to the sense by the recurrence of the *liquid* or smooth flowing consonants (l, m, n, i) in lines 136 144

Lap me, let me be wrapped or folded 'lap' is a mere corruption of 'wrap' Comp *Comus*, 257 "lap it in Elysium"

Lydian airs, soft and sweet music "Of the three chief musical modes or measures among the ancients, the Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian, the first was majestic (*Par Lost*, i 550), the second sprightly, the third amorous or tender" Comp *Lyc* 189

137 Married to, associated with Comp Wordsworth—

"Wisdom married to immortal verse"—*Excurs viii*

Shakespeare (*Sonnet cxvi*) speaks of 'the marriage of true minds' By a similar metaphor we say that a person is *wedded* to a habit or a theory

"Immortal verse" is poetry which, like that of Milton himself, "the world should not willingly let die", see *Comus*, 516

138 'Such as may penetrate the soul that meets it or sympathises with it' Comp Cowper—

"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,  
And as the mind is pitched, the ear is pleased  
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave"

In this line 'pierce' rhymes with 'verse'

139 *bout*, a turn or bend, referring here to the melody 'Bout' is another form of 'bight,' and is cognate with bow

140 long drawn out the scansion of this line will show its appropriateness to the sense 'Long,' an adverb modifying 'drawn out'

141 wanton heed and giddy cunning the music, in order to be expressive, must be free or unrestrained, yet correctly and skilfully rendered 'Wanton heed' and 'giddy cunning' are examples of oxymoron 'Cunning' = skill (A S *cunnan*, to know, be able), now used in the restricted sense of 'wiliness', Comp the similar degradation of meaning in *craft*, originally 'strength', *artful*, *designing*, etc

142 voice, here absolute case along with the participle 'running' comp l 62, note For the sense of 'melting' comp *Il Pens* 165

mazes, the intricate or difficult parts of the music

143 Untwisting all, etc comp note on *Arc* 72 The harmony that is in the human soul is generally deadened or imprisoned, and it is only by sweet music or some other stimulus that touches a chord within us that the hidden harmony of the soul reveals itself See Shakespeare, *Mei of Venice*, v 1 61



145 That, so that the use of 'that' instead of 'so that' to introduce a clause of consequence, is common in Elizabethan writers and in Milton himself

Orpheus' self 'Orpheus himself' we should now say 'Self' was originally an adjective = 'same,' in which sense it is still used with pronouns of the third person (as *himself*, *his self*). Then it came to be regarded as a substantive, and was preceded by the possessive pronouns or by a noun in the possessive case (as *myself*, *ourselves*, *Orpheus' self*). In the latter sense it is not used with pronouns of the third person we cannot say *his self*, but *him self*

Orpheus, "in the Greek mythology, was the unparalleled singer and musician, the power of whose harp or lyre drew wild beasts, and even rocks and trees, to follow him His wife Eurydice having died, he descended into Hades to recover her if possible His music, charming even the damned, prevailed with Pluto (the god of the lower world), who granted his prayer on condition that he should not look on Eurydice till he had led her completely out of Hades and into the upper world Unfortunately, on their way upwards, he turned to see if she was following him, and she was caught back" (Masson) *Comp II Pens* 105, *Lyc* 58

heave, raise, lift up *comp Comus*, 885 "heave thy rosy head"

146 golden slumber 'Golden' may here mean simply 'happy,' or it may be used because Orpheus is amongst the gods Homer often applies 'golden' to that which belongs to the gods *Comp aurea quies*, in Milton's *Eleq* iii

147 Elysian flowers Elysium was the abode of the spirits of the blessed, where they wandered amidst flowers and beauties of every kind *Comp Com* 257, 996

148 'Such music as would have moved Pluto to set Eurydice completely free' In *Quint Noi* 23, Milton calls Pluto *summanus*, chief of the dead.

149 to have quite set free 'to have set' is here infinitive of result, and the perfect tense denotes something that had not been accomplished and is no longer possible *comp* the meanings of 'he hoped to be present' and 'he hoped to have been present' *Quite* = unconditionally or completely

150 Eurydice see note on l 145 above, also *II Pens* 105

151 These delights, etc. the last two lines of the poem recall the closing lines of Marlowe's *Passionate Shepherd*—

"If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love"

Milton here accepts the mood of Mirth, but only on the condition that its pleasures are such as he has enumerated

## IL PENSEROSO

1 Hence comp note on *L'Allegro* 1 The opening lines recall certain lines by Sylvester—

“Hence, hence, false pleasures, momentary joys,  
Mocke us no more with your illuding toyes”

vain deluding Joys ‘vain’ is the Lat *ianus*, empty, which is always opposed to *vera*, true In *L'Allegro* the poet has described true mirth, and now ‘to commendation of the true, he joins condemnation of the false’ ‘Deluding’ is deceitful, not what it appears to be

2 These ‘Joys’ are said to be the brood (i.e. breed or offspring) of Folly by no father, in order to imply that they are the product of pure or absolute foolishness, they are by nature essentially and altogether foolish So the goddess Night, one of the first of created beings, is said by Greek poets to have given birth without a husband to Death, Dreams, Sleep, etc

Notice the use of the cognate words ‘brood’ and ‘bred’ in the same line

3 How little you bested, of how little avail you are ‘Bested’ is the present indicative, but the past participle is the only part of the verb now in common use, as in the phrase ‘to be hard bested,’ i.e. to be in sore need of help ‘To stead’ occurs frequently in Shakespeare in a transitive sense = to profit, to assist, but the word ‘stead’ now occurs only in phrases, e.g. ‘to stand in good stead,’ and in compounds, e.g. *steadfast*, *steady*, home *stead*, *bedstead*, *instead*, etc comp names of places, e.g. Hampstead, Kronstadt, etc Its root is the verb ‘stand,’ and its literal sense is ‘place’

4 fill the fixèd mind satisfy the thoughtful or sober mind, comp Spenser’s *F* Q iv 7

toys, trifles In the *Anat of Mel* we read of persons who “complain of toys, and fear without a cause”

5 idle brain, foolish mind The Old Eng *idel* means ‘empty or vain’, in this sense we speak of ‘an idle dream’ ‘Brain’ may be used here for mind, but it may be noted that, just as melancholy was supposed to be due to a certain humour of the body, so ‘a cold and moist brain’ was believed to be an inseparable companion of folly

6 fancies fond, foolish imaginations ‘Fond’ has here its primary sense of ‘foolish,’ *fanned* being the past participle of an old verb *fonnen*, to be foolish It is now used to express great liking or affection, the idea of folly having been almost lost, except in certain uses of the word in the north of England and in Scotland Chaucer uses *fonne* = a fool, and *fondling* is still

used either as a term of endearment or to denote a fool. It may be noted that in a similar way the word *dote* originally meant 'to be silly' and now 'to love excessively'. Comp. *Lyc* 56, *Son.* xiv 8, *Sams Agon* 1686

6 possess, occupy, fill 'occupy the imaginations of the foolish with gaudy shapes or appearances'. In the English Bible we read of "a man *possessed* of a devil," i.e. occupied by an evil spirit

For 'shapes,' comp *L'Alleg* 4

7 thick, abundant, close together, here qualifying 'shapes' comp "thick coming fancies," *Macbeth*, v 3. The different senses of the word are seen in 'thick as hail,' 'thick fluid,' 'thickly populated,' 'thick head,' 'thick-skinned,' 'a thick fog,' 'a thick stick,' etc

8 motes, particles of dust here called 'gay' because dancing in the sunbeam. See *Matt* vii 3

people the sun-beams. The specks of dust are said to people or occupy the sunbeams because it is chiefly in the direct rays of the sun that they become visible. By using the verb 'to people' Milton strengthens the comparison between them and the shapes or images that occupy the idle imagination

9 likest, adj superlative degree, qualifying 'shapes'. 'Like' is now an exception to the rule for the formation of the comparative and superlative forms of monosyllabic adjectives. We say 'more like,' 'most like'. But, in Milton's time, there was greater grammatical freedom, and in *Comus*, 57 he uses "more like". He also has such forms as *resolutest*, *exquisitest*, *elegantest*, *moralest*, etc., which according to present usage are inadmissible. In such phrases as 'like his father,' 'like' has come to have the force of a preposition, but in the phrase 'likest hovering dreams,' the noun is governed by 'to' understood, as in Latin it would be in the dative case

10 fickle pensioners train, inconstant attendants of sleep. Morpheus, the son of Sleep and the god of Dreams. The name means literally 'the shaper,' he who creates those shapes or images seen in dreams. Morpheus was generally represented with a cup in one hand and in the other a bunch of poppies, from which opium is prepared. Hence the word 'morphua'

'Pensioners,' followers. Queen Elizabeth had a bodyguard of handsome young men of noble birth, whom she styled her *Pensioners*. A 'pensioner' is strictly one who receives a pension, and hence a dependent. 'Train,' something *drawn* along (Lat *traho*, to draw), hence train of a dress (line 34), of carriages, of followers

See note on *L'Allegro*, 10, regarding the imagery and metre of the first ten lines of this poem

11 *hail* 'an old form of salutation, meaning 'may you be in health': the word is cognate with *hale*, *heal*, etc

12 *divinest* The superlative degree of adjectives is often used in Latin to mark a high degree of a quality, when the thing spoken of is not compared with the rest of a class. This is the *absolute* use of the superlative, as here.

13 *visage*, face, mien (Lat *visum*, 'that which is seen') The word is now mostly used to express contempt

14 To hit the sense, etc. to be distinguishable by human eyes. It is a fact that light may be of such intensity that the sense of sight loses all discriminative power. So we speak of a 'blinding' flash of light. For the use of the verb 'hit' compare *Arcades*, 77 in *Antony and Cleopatra* 2 Shakespeare speaks of a perfume *hitting* the sense of smell. The expression is obsolete

15 *weaker view*, feeble power of vision. 'Weaker' is used absolutely comp 'divinest,' l 12, and 'profaner,' l 140. This is also a Latin usage

16 *O'erlaid overlaid* covered, in order to reduce the intensity of the brightness of Melancholy's face. Milton thus skilfully converts the association of blackness and melancholy, which in *L'Allegro* makes her repulsive, into an expression of praise, and at the same time connects Melancholy with Wisdom—one of the purposes of the poem. In the *Anat of Mel* there is a reference to the disputed question whether 'all learned men, famous philosophers, and languages have been melancholy'

Comp *Exodus*, xxxiv 29, where Moses is said, after having been in God's presence, to have covered his face with a veil in order that the children of Israel might be able to look upon him

*staid*, steady, sober, grave. the root is 'stay'

17 *Black* but etc. There is an ellipsis here, the construction being (It is true that she is) black, but (it is) such black as might become a beautiful princess like Prince Memnon's sister

such as - see note on *L'Allegro* 29 comp lines 106, 145

*in esteem*, in our estimation. 'Esteem' as a verb is now used only to express high regard for a person, but the noun, though chiefly used in the same sense, may be used along with adjectives which convey a contrary meaning, e.g. poor esteem, low esteem, etc. 'Esteem,' 'aim,' and 'estimate' are cognate (Lat *aestimo*)

18 *Prince Memnon's sister* Memnon, the son of Tithonus and Eos (Aurora), was king of the Ethiopians, and fought in aid of Priam in the Trojan war, he was killed by Achilles. Though dark-skinned, he was famous for his beauty, and his sister (Hemera) would presumably be even more beautiful. The

morning dew drops were said by the ancient Greeks to be the tears of Aurora for her dead son, Memnon

18 *beseem*, suit, become This is the original sense of the simple verb *seem*, compare the adjective *seemly*=becoming, decent 'Beseem' here governs 'sister' and 'queen'

19 *starred* *Ethiop queen* Cassiopea, wife of Cephens, king of Ethiopia According to one version of her story, she boasted that the beauty of her daughter Andromeda exceeded that of the Nereids, according to another version (adopted by Milton) it was her own beauty of which she boasted For her presumption Ethiopia was ravaged by a sea monster, from whose jaws Andromeda was saved by her lover Perseus After death both mother and daughter were *starred*, i.e. changed into stars or constellations This is probably why Milton calls the former 'starred' it might, however, mean 'placed amongst the stars,' or even 'adorned with stars,' as she was so represented in old charts of the heavens

20, 1 *above the Sea-Nymphs* this is an instance of elliptical comparison (*comparatio compendiaria*), the full construction being, 'to set her beauty's praise above (that of) the Sea-Nymphs'

21 'And (by so doing) offended their powers' 'Powers'=divinities (Lat *numina*)

22 *higher far descended*, far more highly descended 'Higher' is an adverb modifying 'descended' 'To be of high descent'='to be of noble birth'

23 *There is the object and Vesta the nom* of 'home'

*bright-haired* with this compound adjective compare neat handed, smooth shaven, civil-suited, dewy feathered, wide watered, fresh-blown, high embowed, etc., all of which occur in these poems They consist of an adjective and a participle, the adjective representing an adverb

*Vesta* As in the case of *Mirth*, Milton gives *Melancholy* that genealogy which he thinks best suited to his purpose. *Vesta*, among the Romans, was the goddess of the domestic hearth, every dwelling was, therefore, in a sense a temple of *Vesta* Her symbol was a fire kept burning on her altar by the *Vestals*, her virgin priestesses, and by making her the mother of *Melancholy*, Milton signifies that the melancholy of *Il Penseroso* is not the gloominess of the misanthrope nor the unhappiness of the man of impure heart, but the contemplative disposition of a pure and sympathetic soul

*long of yore*, long years ago 'Of yore' is an adverbial phrase like 'of old' and is modified by 'long' The original sense of 'yore' is 'of years,' i.e. in years past

24 solitary Saturn The Romans attributed the introduction of the habits of civilized life to Saturn, the son of Uranus and Terra, and it seems to be for this reason that Milton makes Vesta, the pure goddess of the hearth, his daughter. He is called 'solitary' either because he devoured his own offspring or because he was dethroned by his sons, in either case it is clear that Milton signifies that Melancholy comes from Solitude or Retirement. In astrology the planet Saturn was supposed, by its influence, to cause melancholy, and persons of a gloomy temperament are said to be Saturnine, in the old science of palmistry also, there was a line on the palm of the hand called the Saturnine line, which was believed to indicate melancholy.

25 His daughter she, she was his daughter. Some editors read 'she (being) his daughter,' making the construction absolute. But it must be remembered that in Latin the noun or pronoun in the absolute clause cannot be the subject or object of the principal clause, as it would be here, and, further, the punctuation favours the view that 'his daughter she' is to be taken as an independent clause.

26 was not held a stain, was not considered to be a reproach. Mythological genealogies are apparently governed by no law. 'Held' is here a verb of incomplete predication.

27 Oft, original form of 'often,' which was at first used only before vowels or the letter *h* comp. *L'Allegro*, 53

glimmering glades 'Glimmer' is a frequentative of 'gleam,' i.e. gleaming at intervals. 'Glade' is an open space in a wood.

29 woody Ida. This probably refers to Mt. Ida in the island of Crete, Zeus or Jupiter was said to have been brought up in a cave in that mountain, though some traditions connect his name with Mt. Ida in Asia Minor. Here Saturn met Vesta before Jove (i.e. Jupiter) was born. Saturn's reign was called the Golden Age of Italy.

30 yet, as yet, up to that time. In modern English we cannot omit 'as' before 'yet' when 'yet' precedes the verb, if we do, the meaning of 'yet' would be changed to 'nevertheless'. In Shakespeare this omission of 'as' before 'yet' is common in negative clauses.

fear of Jove. Saturn was dethroned by his sons, and his realm distributed by lot between Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto. See *Cōmus* 20, and Keats' *Hyperion*.

31 pensive, thoughtful. comp. *Lyc* 147. It is from Lat. *pendo*, to weigh, so we speak of a person weighing his words.

Nun, a woman who devotes herself to celibacy and seclu-

sion, hence the word is well applied to the daughter of pure Vesta and solitary Saturn comp 1 103

31 devout, radically the same word as 'devoted', the former is used in the general sense of 'pious,' applied to those given up or ~~voiced~~ to religious exercises while the latter is used of strong attachment of any kind,--to God, to any sacred purpose, to friends, etc.

32 steadfast, constant, resolute comp 'staid,' line 16, and 'bested,' line 3 The suffix *-fast* means 'firm,' as in the phrases 'fast bound' 'fast asleep,' 'fast colour,' and in the words 'fasten' and 'fastness'

demure, modest Trench points out that this is the primary meaning of the word, though it now implies that the modesty is assumed It is from the French *de (bons) mœurs*, i. e. of good manners The Latin word *mores* (manners) was used in the sense of 'character', hence our word *moral* For the form of the word, comp 'debonair,' *L'Alleg* 21

33 All this may be taken as an adverb modifying the phrase 'in a robe of darkest grain' Comp 'all in white' (*Son xliii*), all=from head to foot

grain, purple colour It is interesting to trace the various uses of this word to its primary sense 'a small seed' It came to be applied to any small seed like object, then to any minute particle (e.g. *grains* of sand), it was thus used of the small cochineal insects, whose bodies yield a variety of red dyes, and finally to the dyes so obtained. Hence 'grain,' as used here, denotes a dark purple, sometimes called Tyrian purple But, as these dyes were very durable, 'to dye in grain' came to mean 'to dye deeply' or 'to dye in fast colours' and, more generally still, we speak of a habit or a vice being 'ingrained' in a person's character Comp *Com* 750, *Par Lost*, v 285, vi 242, and Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*—

"So deep in grain he dyed his colours"

(The word 'grain,' from its sense of 'particle,' is applied also to the arrangement of particles or the texture of wood or stone, and even of cloth)

35 And (in) sable stole of cypress lawn, in a black scarf of fine linen crape

'Sable,' here used in the sense of 'black,' this being the colour of the best sable fur The stole (Lat *stola*) worn by Roman ladies was a long flounced robe, reaching to the feet, short-sleeved, and girded round the waist. Milton, however, means a hood or veil, which was first passed round the neck and then over the face such a stole was worn to denote mourning The word is now used only of a long narrow scarf, fringed at both ends, and worn by ecclesiastics

'Cypress' (often spelt *cypres*) by itself denotes 'crape,' a word which is probably from the same root (Lat. *crispus*, curled), when combined with 'lawn,' it denotes crape of the finest kind. The spelling gave rise to the theory that 'cypress' was so called because first made in the island of Cyprus (which has given a name to copper), but this is doubtful.

'Lawn' is really a sort of fine linen—a bishop's surplice is made of it—Comp. Pope's line—

"A *saint in crape* is twice a *saint in lawn*"

36 decent shoulders The Latin *decens* meant either 'graceful' or 'becoming.' Milton uses the word in the former sense else where, and may also do so here. If it is used in the latter sense it is prophetic, the stole being drawn over the shoulders so as to be becoming.

37 wonted state, usual stately manner Here 'state' refers to the dignified approach of the goddess in l. 81 it has its older and more restricted sense = seat of honour. 'To keep state' was to occupy the seat of honour.

'Wonted' = accustomed. This is apparently the past participle of a verb *to wont* (see Com. 332), but the old verb *wonen*, to dwell or to be accustomed, had *woned* or *wont* for its participle. The fact that 'wont' was a participle was forgotten, and a new form was introduced—'wonted' (= won-ed-ed). The two forms have now distinct uses. 'wont' is used as a noun = custom, or as a participial adjective with the verb 'to be' (see line 123), 'wonted' is used only as an adjective, never predicatively.

38 musing gait contemplative manner of walking 'Gait' is cognate with 'gate'—a way, perhaps the same word. It is a mistake to connect either of these words radically with the verb 'go.'

39 And (with) looks commercing, etc. Milton may mean not only that the looks of the goddess were turned to heaven, but also that she was communing with heaven. This would give additional significance to l. 40. The use of the word 'commerce' has been restricted in two ways—(1) by being applied only to trade, whereas Shakespeare, Milton, and others use it of any kind of intercourse, and (2) by being used only as a noun, where is Milton used it as verb and noun. He also accents it here on the second syllable. The Latin *commercium* was of general application comp. Ovid's *Tristia*, v. 10, "*Exercent illi sociæ commercia lingua*."

40 rapt, enraptured to be rapt in thought is to be so occupied with one's thoughts as to become oblivious to what is around, as if the mind or soul had been carried away (Lat. *raptus*, seized) comp. 'ecstasies,' l. 165 and note, and Com. 794. Milton also used the word of the actual snatching away of a person. 'What



accident hath *rapt* him from us,' *Par Lost*, n 40 (The student should note that there is a participle '*rapt*' from the English verb '*rap*,' to seize quickly, from this root comes '*rape*,' while '*iapine*,' '*rapid*,' '*iapacious*,' etc., are from the Latin root)

40 soul, nominative absolute On the expressiveness of the eye, comp Tennyson's line—

"*Her eyes are homes of silent prayer*"

41. There, in that position

held in holy passion still, held motionless through holy emotion '*Passion*' (Lat *patio*) is here used in its primary sense of 'feeling or emotion' it is used in this sense in the Bible (*Acts*, xiv 15, *Jas* 1 17) It was then applied to pain or suffering, as in the phrase '*Passion week*' The word is now used chiefly of anger or eager desire There are two cognate adjectives, *patient* and *passive*

Forget thyself to marble, become as insensible as a marble statue to all around Comp *On Shakespeare*, 14 The same idea occurs in the phrase '*to be petrified with astonishment*'

43 With a sad leaden, etc with the eyes cast down towards the earth as if in sadness or deep thought "*Leaden coloured eye sockets betoken melancholy, or excess of thoughtfulness*" (Masson) The poet Gray has the same idea "*With leaden eye that loves the ground*"

44 fix, subjunctive after '*till*,' because referring to the future The subjunctive mood after '*till*' and '*when*' is now generally superseded by the indicative comp lines 41, 122, 173

as fast, as steadfastly (as they were before fixed on the skies) see note on l 38

46 Spare Fast Frugality of life is here personified and represented as lean Milton, in his writings, frequently associates plain living with high thinking, and in his own habits he was extremely frugal and abstemious In his sixth *Elegy* he declares that, though the elegiac poets may be inspired by good cheer, the poet who wishes to sing of noble and elevated themes (to '*diet with the gods*') must follow the frugal precepts of Pythagoras '*the poet is sacred, he is the priest of heaven, and his bosom conceives, and his mouth utters, the hidden god*' This is the idea conveyed in lines 47, 48 See *Comus* 761 for the praises of temperance, and also *Son* 11

doth diet And hears There is here a change of grammatical construction due to change of thought we should say either '*doth diet and (doth) hear*' or '*diets and hears*'

47 Muses the goddesses who presided over the different kinds of poetry and the arts and sciences were daughters of Jupiter, and lived on Mount Olympus

48 Aye, ever, always 'Sing,' 'infinitive after 'hears'

50 trim, well-kept, and pleasing to the eye comp *L'Alleg*

75 In Milton's time the style of gardening was extremely artificial Shakespeare and Milton both have the word 'trim' in the sense of 'adornment'

his, is not here used for *his*, Leisure being personified

51 first and chiefest, above all According to modern usage the form 'chiefest' would be a double superlative, but, as Milton avoids double comparatives and superlatives, it is probable that 'chief' is not to be taken in its strict sense, but merely as denoting a high degree of importance, it would therefore admit of comparison Shakespeare, on the contrary, often used a double comparative or superlative merely for emphasis

52 yon, yonder, an adverb, in Milton it is generally an adjective comp *Are* 36 It is now used only as an adjective, and 'yonder' as an adjective or adverb

soars on golden wing, etc "A daring use of the great vision, in *Ezekiel*, chap 1, of the sapphire throne, the wheels of which were four cherubs, each wheel or cherub full of eyes all over, while in the midst of them, and underneath the throne, was a burning fire Milton, whether on any hint from previous Biblical commentators I know not, ventures to name one of these cherubs who guide the fiery wheelings of the visionary throne He is the Cherub Contemplation It was by the serene faculty named Contemplation that one attained the clearest notion of divine things,—mounted, as it were, into the very blaze of the Eternal" (Masson) In *Com* 307 Milton makes Contemplation the nurse of Wisdom

'Cherub' and 'Contemplation' are in apposition to 'him,' 1 52 'Contemplation' is to be pronounced here as a word of five syllables

55 hst along imperative of the verb 'to hst' = to bring silently along, or to call to in a whisper The word is here very expressive, Silence is summoned by the word which is used to command silence There is no doubt that 'hst,' 'hush,' and 'whist' are imitative sounds all used originally as interjections, they were afterwards used as verbs, their past participles being *hst*, *hushed*, and *whist* Hence Skeat thinks that 'hst' in the above line is a past participle = hushed, i.e. "bring along with thee the mute, hushed Silence" This is an improbable rendering 'Hst' is now used only as an interjection, and 'whist' only as an interjection and the name of a game at cards

It may be noted that as Silence is here personified, there is no tautology in describing her as 'mute'

56 'Less, unless 'Un' in the word 'unless' is not the negative prefix, but the preposition 'on.'

56 *Philomel*, the nightingale (Greek *Philomela* = lover of melody) According to legend, she was a daughter of Pandion, King of Attica, and was changed at her own prayer into a nightingale to escape the vengeance of her brother-in-law Tereus See *Son* 1 and notes

deign a song, be pleased to sing (Lat *dignor* = to think worthy)

57 *plight*, strain There are two words 'plight' of diverse origin and use, and editors of Milton differ as to which is used here (1) 'Plight' = something *plaited* or interwoven, and so applicable to a strain of sounds interwoven, as in the nightingale's song Milton, in this sense, speaks of the 'plighted clouds,' *Com* 301 (2) 'Plight' = something promised, a duty or condition, now chiefly used to signify an unfortunate condition (A S *plight*, danger) The former is probably the meaning here

58 *Smoothing the rugged brow of Night*, i.e. softening the stern aspect of night See the same idea of the power of music repeated in *Com* 251—

"Smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smiled"

'Smoothing' qualifies 'Philomel'

59 *While Cynthia*, etc the nightingale's song being so sweet that the moon in rapture checks herself in her course in order to listen

*Cynthia*, a surname of the Greek Artemis, the goddess of the moon, as *Cynthius* was of her brother Apollo, the god of the sun, both were born on Mount Cynthus in the isle of Delos The Romans identified their goddess Diana with Artemis, and in this character she rode in a chariot drawn by four stags Milton, however, here and elsewhere, speaks of dragons being yoked to her chariot this applies rather to Ceres, the goddess of plenty Shakespeare refers frequently to the "dragons of the Night"

On 'check,' see note on *L'Alleg* 96

60 the accustomed oak, the oak where the nightingale was accustomed to sing, and where the poet perhaps had often listened to it He may refer (as Masson suggests) to some particular oak over which he had himself often watched the moon, thus giving a personal touch to his bold fancy The use of the definite article 'the' favours this view

61 *shunn'st the noise of folly*, *avoidest the revels of the foolish* 'Noise,' in Elizabethan writers, has often the sense of 'music,' and it is used by Ben Jonson and Shakespeare to denote 'a company of musicians' The 'noise of folly' might thus mean 'a company of foolish singers or revellers.'

62 Most musical, most melancholy' As in l 57 the poet associated sweetness and sadness, so also in this line, almost as if music and melancholy were causally related Comp Shelley, *To a Skylark*—

"Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught,

Our ~~sweetest~~ songs are those that tell of saddest thought "

63 I often woo thee, chauntress, among the woods in order to hear thy even song 'Chauntress,' the feminine of 'chaunter,' one who chants or sings 'To enchant' is to charm by song

65 missing thee, if I miss thee, i e if I do not hear thy song

unseen see note on 'not unseen,' *L'Alleg* 57 It has been argued from these words that *Il Penseroso* must have been written before *L'Allegro*

66 smooth-shaven green, where the grass has been newly cut 'Green' as a noun applies to 'a flat stretch of grass grown land' For the form of the compound adjective see note on *L'Alleg* 22, and comp 'wide watered,' 'civil-suited,' 'high-embowed,' etc

67 wandering moon The epithet 'wandering' is frequently applied to the moon in Latin and Italian poetry " *vaga luna,*" Horace, *Sat* 1 8, "*crrantem lunam,*" Virgil, *Aen* 1 742

68 noon here used in its general sense = highest position, comp the general use of the word 'zenith' Ben Jonson speaks of the "noon of night," and Milton in *Sams Agon* applies it to men—"amidst their highth of noon" The word is in prose usually restricted to the sense of 'mid day', it is derived from the Lat *nonus*, ninth, and the church services held at the ninth hour of the day (3 P M) were called *nones* When these were changed to midday, the word 'noon' was used to denote that hour, and hence its present use

Some interpret 'highest noon' as implying that the moon is nearly full

69 Like one see note on l 9 'Like' is an adjective, 'one' is governed by 'to understood

72 Stooping Keightley's note on this is "He alludes here to that curious optical illusion by which, as the clouds pass over the moon, it seems to be she, not they, that is in motion This is peculiarly observable when the wind is high, and the clouds are driven along with rapidity" 'Stooping' and 'riding' are co ordinate attributes of 'moon'

73 plat of rising ground, 'level top of some hillock' 'Plat is a *plot* or small piece of level ground *plot* is the A S form of the word Its relation etymologically with *flat* *plate*, etc, is doubtful, though commonly taken for granted

74 curfew sound 'Curfew' (Fr. *courre feu* - fire cover), the bell that was rung at eight or nine o'clock in the evening as a signal that all fires and lights were to be extinguished. As this custom was still in force in Milton's time the sound would be familiar to him, though he is not here closely detailing his own experience. It must be remembered also that 'curfew' or 'curfew bell' was sometimes used in the more general sense of 'a bell that sounded the hour.' 'Sound, infinitive after 'hear', 'to' (the so called sign of the infinitive) being omitted after such verbs as make, see, hear, feel, bid, etc.

75 some wide watered shore, the shore of some wide 'water.' These words do not show whether the poet refers to a lake, a river (e.g. the Thames), or even the sea-shore, for the word *water* may be used of any of them, and *shore* may be employed in its primary sense of 'boundary' or 'edge.' It is pointed out by Masson that in every other case in which Milton uses the word 'shore' he refers to the sea or to some vast expanse of water. 'Some' shows that the poet is describing an ideal scene, not an actual one.

76 Swinging slow this would be an apt description of the sound of the distant sea, but it more probably refers to the curfew. Shakespeare has 'cullen bell' (*King Henry VI* Pt II l. 1). Notice the effect of the rhythm and alliteration of this line in bringing out the meaning.

77 air, weather, state of the atmosphere

78 Some still removed place, some quiet and retired spot (comp. l. 81). The Latin participle *remotus* ('moved back') meant either 'retired' or 'distant.' Milton here uses 'removed' in the former sense, and Shakespeare has the same usage, employing also the noun 'remoteness' - solitude. In modern English, when 'remote' is used without any qualification, it almost always denotes distance, either in time or place.

will sit, will be suited to my mood. In lines 77, 78, we find a future tense both in the principal and conditional clauses. This sequence of tenses is allowable in English, but the tense of the conditional clause may be varied, e.g.

(1) Fut. Indic. "If the air *will* not permit," etc.

(2) Pres. Indic. "If the air *does* not permit," etc.

(3) Pres. Subjunct. "If the air *do* not permit," etc.

The first form is the least common, though many Indian students use it invariably. It is a good rule to avoid it.

79 through the room, adverbial phrase modifying 'to counterfeit'

80 Teach light, etc. the red hot ashes merely serve to make the darkness visible. It will be observed that the poet has now

shifted the scene from the country to the town, or at least from out of-doors to indoors

81 This line qualifies 'place,' line 78

82 Save=except The meaning is that the room would be perfectly quiet except for the chirping of the cricket on the hearth or the cry of the night watchman The cricket is an insect somewhat resembling a grasshopper, which makes a chirping noise

83 bellman's drowsy charm The watchman who, before the introduction of the modern police system, patrolled the streets at night, calling the hours, looking out for fires, thieves, and other nocturnal evils He was accustomed to drawl forth scraps of pious poetry to 'charm' away danger The word 'drowsy' may imply that these guardians of the night were of little use, being often half or wholly asleep

84 nightly harm comp note on *Arcades*, 48

85 let my lamp "Evidently we are now back in the country, in the turret of some solitary mansion, where there are books, and perhaps astronomical instruments How fine, however, not to give us the inside view of the turret-room first, but to imagine some one far off outside observing the ray of light slanting from its window" (Masson) The construction is, 'Let (you) my lamp (to) be seen' 'let' is imperative, with an infinitive complement

87 outwatch the Bear 'Out' as a prefix here means *beyond* or *over*, as in outweigh, outvote, outwit, outrun, etc., and 'watch'=wake "To outwatch the Bear" is therefore to remain awake till daybreak, for the constellation of the Great Bear does not set below the horizon in northern latitudes, and only vanishes on account of the daylight Watch and wake are cognate with wait hence Chaucer's allusion in the *Squire's Tale*, where the maker of the wonderful brass horse is said to "have waited many a constellation Ere he had done this operation"

88 With thrice great Hermes, i.e. reading the books attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (i.e. 'thrice-great') He was an ancient Egyptian philosopher named Thot or Theut, whom the Greeks identified with their god Hermes (the Latin Mercury), the new Platonists regarded him as the source of all knowledge, even Pythagoras and Plato having (it was pretended) derived their philosophy from him A large number of works, really composed in the fourth century A.D., were ascribed to him, the most important being the *Poemandes*, a dialogue treating of nature, the creation of the world, the deity, the human soul, etc

or unsphere The spirit of Plato, "or may bring back the spirit of Plato from heaven," i.e. may search out the doctrines of



of retired spirits or angels according to the number of the seven planets, and in *Par. Reg.* Milton represents the fallen angels as presiding under Satan, as powers over earth, air, fire, and water, and causing storms and disasters.

'Present' is here used in its radical sense (*La con*, with, and *sentis*, to feel) an exact rendering of the Greek *sympathy* (Comp. *I. Illeg.* 111 & 112).

97. Son of time, on one occasion comp. *L. Illeg.* 57. If Pen-  
cemon here passes to the study of the greatest and most solemn  
classic writers.

98. sceptred pall, kingly robe. Both the pall and the sceptre were attributes of royalty, and in ancient Greek tragedies the kings and queens wore a *chiton* (robe) falling to the feet and over this a shawl like garment called by the Romans *palla*. Prof. Hales says that 'sceptred pall' may here mean 'with pall and with sceptre' for two things are expressed by one comp. *Il.* 75 and 116.

99. Presenting Thebes, etc. 'Present' is here used in its technical sense to represent, we now speak of a theatrical representation. Comp. *Arctides*, *sub. titl.*

Archylus is a drama called *Son against Thebes*, this city is also referred to in the *Antigone* and *Oedipus* of Sophocles and the *Becehae* of Euripides. Pelops (from whom the Peloponnesus is said to have derived its name) was the father of Atreus and great grandfather of Agamemnon. His name was so celebrated that it was constantly used by the poets in connection with his descendants and the cities they inhabited. And the 'Tide of Troy' (i.e. the story of the Trojan war) is dealt with in various plays by Sophocles and Euripides. Troy is here called 'divine' because during its long siege, the gods took the keenest interest in the contest.

101, 102. These lines certainly refer to Shakespeare's great tragedies and the words 'though rare' probably express Milton's sense both of Shakespeare's superiority over his contemporaries, and of the comparative barrenness of the English tragic drama until Shakespeare arose. (Comp. the preface to *Samson Agon.*) We thus see clearly that the language applied to Shakespeare in *L. Illeg.*, 133, referred to one aspect of the poet, here we have the other.

busined stage, the tragic drama. 'Buskin' (Lat. *cothurnus*) was a high heeled boot worn by Greek tragic actors in order to add to their stature, and so to their dignity. comp. *L. Illeg.* 132. The words 'buskin' and 'sock' came to denote the kind of drama to which they belonged, and even to express certain styles of composition. Thus Quintilian says, "Comedy does not strut in tragic buskins, nor does tragedy step along in



the slipper of comedy.' Grammatically, 'what is now in  
'hith' (unobscured,) its suppressed antecedent being obj. of 'pre-  
senting.'

103. sad Virgin, i.e. Melancholy comp 1 31

that thy power, etc. 'would that thy power,' or 'I  
would that thy power.' This construction (which has all the  
force of an interjection) is often used to express a wish that  
cannot be realised. 'Raise' (l 104), 'had' (l 105), and 'call'  
(l 106) are all co-ordinate verbs.

104 Muses, like Orpheus, a semi-mythological personage,  
represented as one of the earliest Greek poets. Milton here  
expresses a wish that his sacred hymns could be recovered. For  
'bow'er,' comp. Son. viii 9.

105 For the story of Orpheus, see note on *L'Afegro*, 115.

106 warbled to the string, sung to the accompaniment of a  
stringed instrument. see note on *l. 87*.

107 Drew iron tears. This expresses the inflexible nature of  
Pluto, the god of the lower world. In the same way we speak  
of an 'iron will,' 'non rule,' etc.

109 him that, etc. Chaucer, who left his *Squire's Tale* un-  
finished. In this tale (one of the richest of the *Canterbury*  
*Tales*) we read of the Tartar king, Cambus Khan. Chaucer, like  
Milton, writes the name as one word, but, unlike Milton, and  
more correctly, he does not want the penult. The following  
extracts (from Tyrwhitt's edition of Chaucer) explain the allu-  
sions—

This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,  
Had two sonnes by Jhesu his wife  
Of which the eldest son hight Albrecht,  
That other was called Camball.  
A daughter had this worthy king also  
That youngest was, and hight Canace  
In at the hille door all suddenly  
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,  
And in his hand a broad mirror of glass,  
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring  
And by his side a naked sword hanging

The king of 'Araby and Ind' had sent the horse as a present to  
Cambuscan, and the mirror and ring to Canace. Milton may  
have included Chaucer amongst the 'great birds' in whom *Il*  
*Penseroso* delighted, because the thought of the earliest Greek  
poets suggested Chaucer, "the well of English undefiled," or (as  
Masson thinks) because the reference to the lost poems of Greece  
suggested the unfinished poem of Chaucer. Milton was well  
acquainted with the *Squire's Tale* and with subsequent continua-  
tions of it (e.g. by Spenser).

112 who had Canace to wife (of him) who was Canace's husband Chaucer does not mention his name (except where he mistakenly calls him Camballo) Spenser makes her the wife of Triamond 'To wife', in such phrases 'to' seems to denote the end or purpose

113 That, rel pronoun, antecedent Canact

virtuous, full of power or efficacy The Lat *virtus* = mainly excellence In the English Bible 'virtue' is used in the sense of strength or power (comp *1 Cor* 16:7) and we still say 'by virtue of' = 'by the power of' But the adjective 'virtuous' now denotes only moral excellence

The ring referred to above when worn on the thumb or carried in the purse enabled the wearer to understand the language of birds and the healing properties of all herbs The glass or mirror enabled its owner to look into the future and into men's hearts

114 of the wondrous horse, &c the story Readers of the *Arabian Nights Entertainment* will remember the story of the enchanted horse regarding which Warton says "The imagination of this story consists in Arabian fiction, engrafted on Gothic chivalry Nor is this Arabian fiction purely the sport of arbitrary fancy, it is, in a great measure, founded on Arabian learning The idea of a horse of brass took its rise from the mechanical knowledge of the Arabs, and their experiments in metals"

116 If aught else, whatever else This is a Latinism many clauses in Latin introduced by *si quid*, *si quando*, etc are best introduced in English by such words as 'whatever,' 'when ever' etc

great bards beside, other great bards The poets referred to are such as Ariosto, Tasso and Spenser, in whose romances Milton was well read In one of his prose works he says "I may tell you whither my younger feet wandered I betook me among those lofty fables and romances which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood" 'Beside' as an adverb is now almost displaced by the later form 'besides'

117 sage and solemn tunes, wise and dignified verse, as that of the Spenserian stanza For 'solemn' see *Arc* 7, note

118 turneys 'Turney,' a form of 'tourney' (Fr *tourney*), a mock fight, so called from the swift *turning* of the horses in the combat 'Tournament' is merely a Latinised form of the word, comp *L'Alleg* 123

trophies hung These were arms or banners taken from a defeated enemy and hung up as memorials The word is from the Greek *tropé*, a turning, i.e. causing the enemy to turn

119 enchantments, use of magic arts Radically, 'enchant-

ment' = magic verses sung when it was desired to place a person under some spell (Lat *incantare*, to repeat a chant) comp lines 63, 83, and *Lyc* 59

120 Where more is meant etc in which poetry there is a deeper meaning than is apparent on the surface The poets referred to in l 116 had generally a high moral purpose in their writings, e.g. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is a noble spiritual allegory, the particular references in it being "secondary senses lying only on the surface of the main design" The same is true of Tasso's *Enchanted Forest*

121 Thus, Night, etc 'thus let me be often seen by thee, O Night, in thy pale course'

pale career Contrast 'pale' with the epithets applied by poets to the dawn, e.g. 'ruddy,' 'rosy fingered,' etc

122 civil suited Morn In *L'Allegro* the Sun appears in royal robes and surrounded by his liveried servants, in *Il Penseroso* Morning comes clad in the garb of a simple citizen and attended by wind and rain

'Civil,' from Lat *civis*, a citizen, is here used in its primary sense It is opposed to military or ecclesiastical, as in 'civil engineer,' 'civil service' It has also the meaning of 'polite' or 'well-mannered,' as contrasted with *barbarous* or *rustic* manners; but it has lost (as Trench points out) all its deeper significance "a *civil* man once was one who fulfilled all the duties and obligations flowing from his position as a *civis*"

123 tricked and frowned literally, 'adorned with fine clothes and having the hair frizzled or curled' In *Lycidas*, 170, the sun is said to *trick* his beams the verb is cognate with the noun 'trick,' something neatly contrived

'Frowned' the word originally meant 'to wrinkle the brow,' and there is an old French phrase, *fronner le front*, with this meaning The present form of the word is 'frownc'

as, in the manner in which For 'wont' see note on line 37

124 Attic boy, the Athenian youth Cephalus, beloved by Fos (Aurora), the goddess of the dawn It was while he was stag-hunting on Mount Hymettus in Attica that she fell in love with him

125 kerchief, having the head covered 'Kerchief' is exactly similar in form to 'curfew' (q.r. line 74), it is from Fr *couvert-chef*, head cover The original meaning being overlooked we have now such compounds as 'hand kerchief,' 'neckkerchief,' 'pocket handkerchief'

comely, becoming comp *Merry Wives of Windsor*, iii.

126 piping, whistling 'loud,' used adverbially

127 ushered, introduced (Lat *ostium*, an entrance) The word here qualifies 'Morn' 'Still' is an adjective qualifying 'shower' notice Milton's fondness for this word

128 hath blown his fill, has exhausted itself, has ceased As there is no personification here, *his* = *its* in none of the poems in this volume does the word *its* occur In fact, *it* is almost entirely ignored by Milton, being used only three times in the whole of his poetry, thus arose from the fact that *its* was then a new word, and also because he did not seem to feel the need for it, its place being taken in his involved syntax by the relative pronoun and other connectives, or by *his*, *her*, *thereof*, etc The word *its* does not occur in the language till the end of the sixteenth century, the possessive case of the neuter pronoun *it* and of the masculine *he* being *his* Thus gave rise to confusion when the old gender system decayed, and the form *its* gradually came into use until, by the end of the seventeenth century, it was, generally adopted

Grammatically 'his fill' denotes the extent to which 'the gust hath blown,' and is therefore an adverbial adjunct Some, however, would explain it as a cognate objective

129 Ending With minute drops; the end of the shower being marked by drops falling at intervals 'Minute' (accent on first syllable) is applied as an adjective to something occurring at short intervals, once a minute or so, e.g. 'minute-guns,' 'minute-bells,' etc Minute (accent on second syllable) = very small

130 eaves, projecting edge of the roof This word is singular, though often regarded as plural the final 's' is part of the root, and the plural properly should be *eaveses* (which is not used) An 'eaves-dropper' is strictly one who stands under the drops that fall from the eaves, hence a 'secret listener'

132 flaring, glittering or flashing, generally applied to a light whose brightness is offensive to the eye, and is so used here to suit the mood of *Il Penseroso* 'Flare' is cognate with 'flash'

me, Goddess, etc, i.e. Melancholy, bring me, etc

133 twilight groves and shadows brown, groves with such half-light as there is in the twilight, when the shadows cast on the ground are not deep black, but (as Milton says) 'brown' Comp *Par Lost*, iv 254—

"Where the unpierced shade  
Imbrowned the noon-tide bowers"

Also *Par Lost*, ix 1086—

"Where highest woods, impenetrable  
To star or sunlight, spread their umbrage broad,  
And brown as evening"

The Italians express the approach of evening by a word meaning 'to embrown'

134 **Sylvan** *Sylvanus*, the god of fields and forests 'Sylvan' is a misspelling of 'silvan' (Lat *silva*, a wood), the spelling in *y* was made in order to assimilate *silva* to the Greek *hylé*, a wood, but the radical connection is doubtful

135 **monumental oak** The obvious meaning of 'monumental' is, as Masson suggests 'memorial,' 'old,' 'telling of bygone years' An aged oak is a memorial of the flight of time, it suggests also massiveness

136 **rude axe with heaved stroke** This is an example of chiasmus, the epithet 'rude' belonging to 'stroke,' and 'heaved' to 'axe' 'Heaved'—uplifted

137 **nymphs, &c wood nymphs** comp line 151

**daunt**, to frighten (from Lat *domitare*, to subdue; hence 'indomitable'=not able to be daunted)

138 **hallowed haunt**, abode sacred to them

139 **covert**, sheltered spot, thicket a 'covert' is strictly a 'covered place'

140 **no profaner eye, no unsympathetic eye** 'Profaner'=somewhat profane, on this Latin use of the comparative see L. 15, note 'Profane' (Lat *pro*, before, and *fanum*, a temple) was applied to those who, not being initiated into the sacred rites, were compelled to wait outside the temple during the sacrifices, hence it came to mean (1) 'not sacred' as in the phrase 'profane history,' and (2) 'impure,' as in *profane language* Il Penseroso applies it to those not in sympathy with his mood

141 **day's garish eye** Milton frequently speaks of the 'eye of day' (comp *Son* 15, *Com* 978, *Lyc* 26) 'Garish'=staring or glaring, generally used, as here, to express dislike, though some Elizabethan writers use it in a good sense There is an old English verb *garen*=to stare, formed, by the change of *s* to *r*, from A S *gaen*

142 **honeyed thigh** If this means that the bee collects honey on its thigh, it is a mistake, it is the pollen or flower dust that is thus collected, while the honey is sucked into the animal's body Virgil, however, who probably knew more about bees than Milton did, uses a similar expression (*Ecl* 1: 56)

143 **her** see notes on lines 92 and 128

**sing, hum** the verb *sing* is very variously used by Elizabethan writers

145 **consort**, other sounds of nature that accompany the humming of the bee, etc 'Consort' is here used concretely, and in its original sense (Lat *consors* a partner) Old writers fre

quently confused it with 'concert' = harmony, but the words are quite distinct, and in modern English they are never confused

146 Entice the nominatives of this verb are 'bee' and 'waters' Its meaning is 'to induce to come', by a common metaphor sleep is represented as shy, as easily frightened, as requiring to be wooed or enticed Comp 2nd *Henry IV* iii 1

dewy-feathered Sleep We have here one of those compound epithets (so frequent in Milton) which have been described as poems in miniature In most of these the first word qualifies the second, so that 'dewy-feathered sleep' may mean 'Sleep with dewy feathers' The god of Sleep (l 10) was represented as winged, and he may be supposed to shake dew from his wings as the Archangel in *Par Lost* v 286 diffused fragrance by shaking his plumes

It is common, however, for poets to speak of the dew of sleep (comp *Richard III* i 1, *Julius Caesar* ii 1) without any reference to its being winged we might therefore take 'dewy-feathered' to have the force of two co ordinate adjectives 'dewy' and 'feathered' see note on l 98

147-150 This passage is a difficult one Prof Masson reads it thus, 'Let some strange mysterious dream wave (i e move to and fro) at his (i e Sleep's) wings in airy stream,' etc It is customary for poets to speak of Dreams as the messengers of Sleep (see l 10), here a dream is borne on the wings of Sleep and hovers over the poet in an airy stream of vivid images portrayed upon his mental eye

Some, however, take 'his wings' to denote the Dream's wings, in which case it is difficult of explanation one editor therefore suggests that it be struck out, and that 'wave' be regarded as a transitive verb The previous view is preferable (It is possible also to hold that the Dream's wings are displayed (i e reflected) in the airy stream, and that he waves at this reflection, as we say a dog barks at its shadow reflected in a pool of water)

149 lively has its radical sense of 'life like', so we speak of a 'life-like portrait,' a *vivid* picture (Lat *vivus*, living)

151 breathe a verb in the imperative addressed to the goddess Melancholy, as 'bring,' 'hide,' and 'let' in the preceding lines (Some would take it as an infinitive depending on 'let')

153 to mortals good, good to mortals 'Good' = propitious, comp *Lyc* 184 In this line 'Spirit' is to be pronounced as a monosyllable

154 Genius, guardian spirit see *Arcades* and *Comus* regarding the duties of such spirits

155 due feet, my feet that are due at the places of worship

and learning *Due, duty, and debt* are all from the Lat *debitus*, owed, the last directly, the others through French

156 To walk is here a transitive verb=to frequent, to traverse

studious cloister's pale, the precincts or enclosure of some building devoted to learning and (as the next line shows) to religious services 'Cloister' is a covered arcade forming part of a church or college Milton may have been thinking of his life at Cambridge, though the details of the description do not apply to any particular building The radical sense of the word is a *closed-in* place (Lat *clausus*, shut)

'Pale' is a noun=enclosure, etymologically, a place shut in by pales or wooden stakes, hence our words *paling*, *impale*, and *palisade* We still speak of the *pale* of the Church, the *English pale* in Ireland, the *pale* of a subject, etc

157 love the high embowèd roof The poet here passes from the cloister to the inside of some church (it may be the college chapel that is in Milton's thoughts, or even St Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey) 'High embowèd,' i.e. arched or vaulted, as in the Gothic style of architecture, which Milton, with all his Puritanism, never ceased to love "Observe that only at this point of the poem is Penseroso in contact with his fellow creatures Throughout the rest he is solitary" (Wasson)

The grammatical construction is peculiar we cannot say, 'let my due feet never fail to love', it is better therefore to read, 'let (me) love,' etc, *me* being implied in '*my* feet' See note on *L'Alleg* 122

158 antique see *L'Alleg* 128, note

massy proof proof against the great weight of the stone roof, because they are massive Shakespeare and Milton use 'proof' in the sense of 'strong,' and 'massy' is an older form of the adjective than 'massive,' occurring in Spenser and Shakespeare as well as here Similar examples are 'adamantean proof' applied to a coat of mail, not because it is proof against adamant, but because, being made of adamant, it is proof against assailants (*Sam's Agon* 134), also virtue proof=strong against temptation, because virtuous (*Pa. Lost*, v 384) The introduction of a hyphen ('massy-proof'), which does not occur in the first and second editions, has caused some editors to interpret the words as 'proof against the mass they bear' in those cases, however, in which that against which the object is proof is mentioned, the first part of the compound is a noun, e.g. stain-proof, shame-proof, sunbeam proof (*Arc* 88) The first interpretation is therefore more probably correct

159 storied windows, windows of stained glass with stories from Scripture history represented on them 'Story' is an

abbreviated form of 'history,' the latter being directly from Lat. *historia*, the other through the French. It has no connection with 'story' (= part of a house), which means something built (comp. *store*)

159 dight see *L'Alleg* 62, note

160 religious light, such a light as is suited to a place of worship, and tending to prevent one's thoughts from being distracted. 'Religious,' like 'studious' (line 156), is a transferred epithet

161. pealing organ, loud-sounding organ. Milton has several references to the organ (comp. *Par. Lost*, i 708, ii 560)—an instrument upon which he could himself play. 'Blow,' used in a semi-passive sense, and applied to wind-instruments (such as the organ). Line 163 depends on 'blow,' giving the circumstances of the action

162 quire, band of singers or choristers. 'Quire' is another spelling of 'choir' (Lat. *chorus*, a band of singers, Greek *choros*, a band of singers and dancers). A 'choir' is now a body of trained singers who lead the voices of a congregation; the name is also applied to the part of the church in which they are seated. The 'quire below' here means 'the choir below the organ-gallery.' 'Quire,' denoting a collection of sheets of paper, is an entirely different word, being cognate with the French *cahier*, a small book (or, more probably, with the Lat. *quatuor*, four). See note, *Epitaph on M. of W.* 17

163 anthems, sacred music. 'Anthem' is a contraction of the A. S. *antefn*, which is corrupted from the Lat. *antiphona* (Greek *anti*, in return, and *phōnē*, the voice), it is therefore radically the same as the English word *antiphon*, which denotes music sung by choristers alternately, one half of the choir responding to the other

clear, may mean 'clearly sung,' or (as in *Lyc* 70) 'pure' or 'noble'

164 As, relative pronoun, the antecedent 'such' being omitted, as is usual in Chaucer and other old writers

165, 166 Dissolve me into ecstasies. The meaning of these beautiful lines cannot be adequately expressed in prose. The poet desires to hear music that will so melt his soul, so carry him out of himself, that he may almost learn the secrets of divine things. With 'dissolve' comp. 'melting voice' (*L'Alleg* 142), and with 'ecstasies' comp. 'rapt soul' (line 40, note)

'Ecstasy' is the Greek *ekstasis*, standing or being taken out of one's self, as in a trance. It came afterwards to denote madness, as we say of madmen that they are 'beside themselves', but its present meaning is enthusiasm or very strong feeling



168 peaceful hermitage This is a fitting conclusion to the life of Il Penseroso, thus alluded to by Scott (*Marmion*, II.)—

“Here have I thought ’twere sweet to dwell,  
And rear again the chaplain’s cell,  
Like that same peaceful hermitage,  
Where Milton long’d to spend his age ”

In old romances there is constant mention of hermits, men who had retired from society and were supposed to devote their lives to philosophic thought or religious contemplation. Burton, in *Anat of Mel*, says “Voluntary solitariness is that which is familiar with melancholy.” ‘Hermitage’ in this word the suffix *-age* denotes place, as in ‘parsonage’, ‘her-mit,’ formerly written ‘eremite,’ is derived, through French and Latin, from Greek *eremos*, solitary, desert.

In line 167 we have an example of the jussive subjunctive, i. e. the subjunctive expressing a wish or desire, ‘And may find,’ etc. this corresponds to a Latin subjunctive introduced by *quod* or *quod utinam*.

169 hairy gown, garment of coarse shaggy cloth. In the English Bible we read of raiment of camel’s hair worn by Elijah and John the Baptist. ‘Gown’ and ‘cell’ are objects of the verb ‘find’.

170 spell, read slowly and thoughtfully. We talk of ‘spelling out’ the meaning of a difficult passage, as a child names the letters of a word, giving each its proper power. In the same way the poet would learn the nature and powers of the stars and herbs (comp *Son* 111 6). *As—spel, a—story*, as in *gospel*. Milton refers to this knowledge of the virtues of herbs in *Com* 620 640, and *Ept Damon* 150 154.

171 Of, concerning. In this line ‘shew’ rhymes with ‘dew’ this points to the fact that, though the pronunciation *show* was familiar, it was not universal, the word is to be pronounced here like *shoe*. comp *Son* 11, where ‘sheweth’ rhymes with ‘youth’.

173 There may be a reference here to the old astrologers who claimed the power of predicting events from the study of the stars, but such a power was not the ambition of Milton. He rather means that wise experience of the aged, which enables them, through their knowledge of the past, to judge the probable results of different lines of action.

do attain subjunctive after ‘till’ comp I 44

174 strain, utterance. We speak of a cheerful or a sad *strain* of speech or music, probably with a metaphorical allusion to the notes of a stringed instrument. ‘strain’ is literally something stretched.

175 These pleasures, etc. comp. note on *L'Alleg.* 151 It will be noticed that the conditional nature of Milton's acceptance of Melancholy is not so distinctly expressed as that of Virgil

## ARCADES

The sub title of this piece fully explains the occasion of its production. *Arcades*, or "The Arcadians," was a masque of which only the words contributed by Milton have come down to us. It was probably written in 1633, the year before the production of *Comus*, which was composed for another member of the same family.

The lady before whom *Arcades* was 'presented' i.e. represented was Alice Spencer, Countess Dowager of Derby, then over seventy years of age. She is the 'rural queen' of the entertainment. She had been married, when young, to Lord Strange afterwards fifth Earl of Derby. It was to her that the poet Spencer dedicated his *Tears of the Muses* in 1591, and after her husband's death in 1594 he referred to her as Amaryllis in *Colin Clouts come Home again* (1595). She was now Countess Dowager of Derby, a title she retained until her death. In 1600 she married Sir Thomas Egerton, who was afterwards Lord Chancellor and Viscount Brackley. Next year she and her husband purchased the estate of Harsfield in Middlesex, and here they mainly resided. Viscount Brackley died in 1616-17, and his widow survived him for twenty years. She was often visited by her grandchildren, and on some occasion when they wished to entertain her with a masque—then a fashionable form of entertainment—they applied to Henry Lawes, one of the King's private musicians to manage it for them. He applied to his friend Milton for the words and these we now have in the form of three short songs and eighty-three lines of blank verse. This was Milton's first attempt at masque writing.

1 Look, nymphs and shepherds. The scene opens with a group of young men and women moving towards the seat occupied by the Countess Dowager of Derby. As they advance one of the company addresses his companions in song.

3 from hence see note, *L'Alleg.* 1. 'Hence' means 'from this place,' so that in the phrase 'from hence' the force of the preposition is twice introduced. Such idioms arise from forgetfulness of the origin of words.

descrie, make out, discover by the eye. 'Descrie' is radically the same as 'describe' both are from Lat. *describere*, to write fully, to trace out, the one directly, the other through French. Comp. such pairs of words as *secure* and *sûre* *fact* and *fiat*,

*pauper and poor, tradition and treason, potent and puissant*  
(l 60)

4 Too divine to be mistook Comp. Jonson's *Alchemist*, iv 1—

“ A certain touch of air,  
That sparkles a divinity, beyond  
An earthly beauty ”

‘Mistook’ a form of the past tense used as a past participle comp l 47, and see note, *On Shakespeare*, 12

5 This, this is she Comp the Faunies’ song in *The Satyr*, in reference to the queen of James I —

“ This is she, this is she  
In whose world of grace  
Every season, person, place,  
That receive her happy be ”

The whole of the first song in *Arcades* shows that Milton must have read some of Jonson’s masques with care

6 vows, desires comp *Lyc* 159 The Latin *votum* means (1) a solemn promise, (2) a wish or desire See note, *Son* ix 8

bend, are directed.

7 solemn, devout The word is from Lat *sollus*, complete, and *annus*, a year, hence its primary sense is ‘recurring at the end of a completed year’ Hence it came to mean ‘usual,’ and (as religious festivals recur at stated periods) ‘religious’, finally, it was applied to anything that was not to be lightly or hastily undertaken, i.e. serious or grave

8 Fame object of the verb ‘may accuse’

to raise an infinitive of purpose See *Lyc* 70, where Fame is used with the verb *raise*, as here

9 erst, formerly, at first This is the superlative of Old English *er* (ere) see note, *L’Alleg* 107

lavish and profuse These words have radically the same sense ‘lavish’ is from an obsolete verb ‘lave,’ to pour out, and ‘profuse’ is from Lat *profundere*, to pour out

12 Less than half Comp the words of the Queen of Sheba regarding Solomon “Behold the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me,” 2 *Chron* ix 5

13 Envy bid conceal the rest, i.e. Envy commanded the rest to be concealed Comp Thomson’s *Seasons*—

“ Base envy withers at another’s joy,  
And hates that excellence it cannot reach ”

‘Bid’ is the past tense, a form which has arisen out of the past participle ‘bidden’ the past in ordinary use is ‘bade’ This is one of those verbs after which the simple infinitive (without *to*) is

used comp *Son* viii 10, xiv 13 Such omission of *to* now occurs with so few verbs that *to* is often called the sign of the infinitive, but in early English the only sign of the infinitive was the termination *en* (e.g. *speken*, to speak, he can *spelen*) The infinitive, being used as a noun, had a dative form called the gerund which was preceded by *to*, and confusion between this gerundial infinitive and the simple infinitive led to the general use of *to*

14 radiant, sending forth rays or beams of light *Radius* and *ray* are radically the same word

state comp 1 81 "In the phraseology of this stanza there is perhaps a reference to the actual surroundings of the Countess in the masque—devices of bright light, silver rays seeming to shoot from her throne' (Masson) If so, 'state' may here mean the canopy over the throne, or its adornments Comp Jonson's *Hymenææ*, where Juno is represented as seated on a throne—

" And see where Juno  
Displays her glittering *state* and *chair*,  
As she enlightened all the air ' "

20 Might she, etc, she might well be

the wise Latona Latona was the wife of Jupiter before Juno, and mother of Apollo and Diana (see *Son* xii) She was generally worshipped as a goddess in conjunction with her children, and this may explain why Milton introduces her name here

21 towered Cybelé Cybele is here referred to as the mother of the gods in order to compliment the Countess on her distinguished family In works of art she is usually represented as seated on a throne, adorned with a mural crown to signify that she first taught men the art of fortifying cities hence the epithet 'towered' In *Elegy* v Milton speaks of her as the goddess of fertility and crowned with a tower of pines Ovid calls her *turrita mater*, and Spenser writes—

" Old Cybele, arrayed with pompous pride,  
Wearing a *diadem embattled* wide  
With hundred *turrets*, like a turban " *FQ* 11

She was the wife of Saturn and mother of Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Pluto, Vesta and Ceres

23 Juno dares odds, i.e. Juno, in a contest of beauty, would not venture to compete with her on equal terms This implies another compliment to the Countess

24 Who had thought · who *would have* thought (that) etc Comp —

"O had his powerful destiny ordained  
 Me some inferior angel, I had stood  
 Then happy ' (i.e. I would have stood)

24 clime, region see note, *Son* viii 8

25 so unparalleled. Strictly, *unparalleled* cannot have its meaning modified by an adverb of degree it is here used, however, merely to denote a high degree of excellence or beauty. Comp *chiefest*, *Il Pens* 51, note

The student should note the art with which the arrangement of rhymes is varied in the different stanzas of this song. Certain of the rhymes are imperfect, and it is to be remembered that Milton in his poetry used imperfect rhymes freely see lines 2, 3, 9, 10, 30, 38, 42, 62, 68 Allowance must, however, be made for doubtful pronunciation

26 The Genius of the Wood now speaks The introduction of a genius or guardian spirit is a common device in Jonson's masques this form of composition depends more largely upon supernatural agency than the ordinary drama When *Arcades* was first performed Henry Lawes probably acted the part of the Genius (see *Son* viii) he first addresses the gentlemen, then the ladies of the masque (l 32)

gentle, well born, noble This is the original sense of the word in Scott we find the word 'gentle' used to denote persons of rank, a usage still common in Scotland The genius here explains why he called the performers 'gentle' "I call you gentle because, in spite of your disguise, I see," etc Comp *Par Lost*, ii 11

27 I see bright honour, etc Comp

"Yet well I know you come of royal race,  
 I see such *sparks of honour in your face*"

*Hist of King Lear*

The object of 'see' is complex, consisting of a substantive ('honour') and an infinitive ('sparkle')

28 Arcady, Arcadia For the form of the word comp Araby for Arabia, Italy for Italia, family for familia, etc, in all of which *y* represents Lat *a*

Arcadia was a country in Peloponnesus (peninsular Greece) of which the inhabitants were chiefly engaged in pastoral pursuits, they were simple in their manners, and retained their primitive habits long after the rest of Greece Hence writers of pastoral poetry often laid the scene of their poems in Arcadia, and the characters in pastoral dramas were represented as Arcadians (Lat *Arcades*), and described as 'swains' or 'shepherds' Sir Philip Sidney wrote a pastoral romance called *Arcadia* (1590) The phrase 'Arcadian simplicity' has passed into a proverb

29 flood, often used in poetry for 'river'

sung, celebrated in poetry, e.g. by Virgil. See also Shelley's *Arethusa* for a subsequent reference to this 'flood'

30 Alpheus, pronounced Al phé us. A river god who pursued the nymph Arethusa, she was changed by Diana into the fountain of Arethusa in the island of Ortygia at Syracuse, but the god continued to pursue her under the sea, and attempted to mingle his stream with the Ortygian fountain. This story arises from the fact that the Alpheus, a river which rises in Arcadia, flows for some distance underground before falling into the Ionian Sea. The Arcadians believed that an object thrown into the Alpheus would reappear in the fountain of Arethusa. See *Lyc* 85, 132.

sluice, passage, flood-gate. A 'sluice' is literally something that *excludēs* (Lat. *excludere*, to shut off)

31 Stole. From this verb comes 'stealth' see *Com* 503

Arethuse see note, l 30 above

32 breathing roses here applied to the lady performers, so that 'breathing' may mean simply 'animated'. But Milton so often uses the word 'breath' in cases where fragrance or sweetness is signified, that it may here be interpreted in this sense.

33 silver-buskined. Diana and her wood nymphs wore light boots reaching to the calf of the leg such boots were therefore different from the buskins worn by tragic actors, see *Il Pens* 102

as great and good, i.e. as the swains addressed previously, l 26

34 intent, purpose, that towards which the mind is stretched (Lat. *intendere*, to stretch out). See note, *Son* *Anna* 9. For the use of 'free' comp. note, *L'Alleg* 11

35 Was meant. The subject of this verb consists of two nouns, *quest* and *intent*, which together express one idea. The verb is therefore singular. Comp. *Lyc* 7

all, entirely an adverb of degree modifying 'meant'

36 yon, that in the distance. In the oldest English *yond* was a preposition = *beyond*, or an adverb = *yonder*. In *Il Pens* 52 *yon* is an adverb, here it is an adjective. Shakespeare uses *yond* as an adverb and an adjective.

shrine, place sacred to a divinity

37 low reverence, humble reverence

38 comply, aid. It is radically the same as *complete*. 'to comply' is 'to complete' or fulfil. It has no connection with *ply* or *phant*, as is often supposed.

39 glad solemnity. This looks like a verbal contradiction,

but see note on l 7 a solemnity is merely a serious or important duty or function Thus we speak of *solemnising* a marriage

40 lead ye, i e (I will) lead you In this line *ye* occurs twice, once as nominative, once as object. In line 101 it is used as a dative (= to you) "This confusion between *ye* and *you* did not exist in old English *ye* was always used as a nominative, and *you* as a dative or accusative In the English Bible the distinction is very carefully observed, but in the dramatists of the Elizabethan period there is a very loose use of the two forms" (Morris) it is the same in Milton It is to be noticed that *ye* can be pronounced more rapidly than *you*, and is therefore generally used when an unaccented syllable is wanted (as in the above passage) see l 81

41 This line is the grammatical object of the verb 'may behold'

shallow searching comp l 12 and *Lyc* 70 Nothing distinguishes Milton from other writers so much as the force of his epithets, the liberty with which he forms compounds, whether hybrid or not, is also remarkable See *Il Pens* 66, note

42 Which the antecedent is expressed by l 41

full oft 'full,' an adverb of degree, modifying 'oft' 'Alone' is an adjective qualifying 'I'

43 sat the past tense of *sit* takes either of the forms *sat* and *sate*, the former is more common

44 by lot from Jove, i e by Jupiter's allotment

the Power, i e the guardian spirit, *genius loci* Each spot, according to Roman mythology, had a spirit of its own, and Varro says that in Latium there were as many gods as trees

45 oaken bower see note, *Lyc* 33, on *oaken*

46 curl the grove applied to the foliage of the trees, as in the following passage from Sylvester's *Du Bartas*—

"When through their green boughs whistling winds do whirl,  
With wanton puffs, their waving locks to curl"

The expression is a common one in the poetry of the time (see Todd)

47 With ringlets, etc Observe the alliteration of this line five words in it contain the *w* sound 'Wave' = woven, 'intwined with quaint ringlets and wanton windings' There are two forms of the participle, *wove* and *woven*, comp *trod* and *trodde* (*L'Alleg* 131)

quaint, neat, exact In modern English it means 'odd' or old fashioned The word is from Lat *cognitus*, 'known' or remarkable, and Chaucer uses it in the sense of 'famous' In

French it became *count*, which was treated as if from Lat *comptus*, neat, ingenious. This explains how the word obtained the meaning Milton gives it. Its present meaning is due to the fact that what is in one age designed with too great attention to art is liable, in a later age, to seem whimsical and odd. See note on *uncouth*, *L'Alleg* 5

48 *mightly*, nocturnal, pertaining to night comp *Il Pens* 83 *Nightly* is here an adjective, though its force is that of an adverb = at night comp Wordsworth—

“The *nightly* hunter lifting up his eyes”

= The hunter lifting up his eyes *at night*. The usual sense of the word is ‘from night to night’. The two uses are due to the fact that *ly* is both an adjectival and an adverbial suffix

49 *nolsome*, injurious. The word is *noi some*, which is a contraction of *annoy-some*. ‘some’ is the adjectival suffix. The word has therefore no connection with *noise* or *noxious*

*blasting vapours chill* comp *Com* 269, 845, where the Genius performs similar duties. Burton, in *Anat of Mel*, speaks of spirits that “hurt and infect men and beasts, vines, corn, cattle, plants,” etc

50 *brush off the evil dew* comp *Tempest*, 1. 4—

“As *wicled dew* as e’er my mother brushed,  
With raven’s feather, from unwholesome fen”

51 Another alliterative line, showing the same arrangement of adjectives as line 49 see note, *L'Alleg* 40

*thwarting thunder*. ‘Thunder’ is here used for ‘lightning,’ Lat *fulmen*, this explains the epithets ‘blue’ and ‘thwarting’ (shooting obliquely through the sky). *Thwart* was originally an adverb, then it was used as an adjective, and finally as a verb (to cross), as in the phrase “As a shooting star in autumn *thwarts* the night” (*Par Lost*, iv 557). It is now used also as a noun to denote the seats for rowers placed *athwart* a boat

52 *cross*, adverse, unfavourable see *L'Alleg* 122, note

*dire looking planet strikes*. ‘Dire-looking’ = of evil aspect, comp *Lyc* 138. The planet referred to is Saturn, which in astrology and chiromancy was an unlucky star. For the use of ‘strike’ comp *Hamlet*—

“The nights are wholesome, then no planets *strike*,  
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to harm”

53 *worm venom*, the canker-worm. ‘Canker’ is radically the same as *cancer*, an eating or spreading sore comp ‘*taint-worm*,’ *Lyc* 46 —

54 *fetch my round, go my round*. The verb has this sense as it is cognate with *fool* compare “From thence fetching a com-



pass (i.e. making a detour) we came to Rhegium," *Acts*, xxviii  
13

56 early an adverb modifying 'haste,' l 58  
ere, see note, *L'Alleg* 107

odorous breath of morn, fragrant morning breezes Compare Gray's *Elegy* "the breezy call of incense breathing morn"

57 tasselled horn, i.e. huntsman's horn which had tassels hung to it comp *L'Alleg* 53 56

58 high thicket, i.e. thicket on the hill-side  
all about all modifies about, which again modifies haste

59 ranks, rows of trees and plants

60 puissant, potent, powerful (in preventing the effects of the 'evil dew,' etc.) See note on 'descri,' line 3, for explanation of the relation between potent and puissant Comp *The Alchemist*, iv 1—

"I will be puissant, and mighty in my talk to her"

murmurs made to bless, in opposition to the incantations or spells of evil spirits which were either sung or murmured over the doomed object comp *Comus* 525

"By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,  
With many murmurs mixed"

61 But else, i.e. when not thus employed  
deep of night comp the phrase 'dead of night'

62 mortal sense, i.e. the senses of human beings The meaning is, 'When all human beings are asleep, I listen,' etc See *Lyc* 78, note

63 celestial Sirens' harmony, etc In these lines Milton refers (1) to the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres, (2) to that system of astronomy developed by Eudoxus, Plato, Aristotle, Hipparchus, Ptolemy, and others, which is usually called the Ptolemaic system, and (3) to Plato's theory of the relation of the Fates or "daughters of Necessity" to that system

(1) Pythagoras (b.c. 580), having remarked that the pitch of notes depends on the rate of vibration, and also that the planets move with different velocities, was led to extend the same relation to the planets and to suppose that they emit sounds proportional to their respective distances from the Earth, thus forming a celestial concert too melodious to affect the gross ears of mankind This is what is meant by the music or harmony of the spheres Plato supposes this harmony to be produced by Sirens

(2) According to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy the Earth was the centre of our universe, and the apparent motions of the other heavenly bodies were due to the fact that they were fixed in transparent spheres enclosing the central Earth at different

distances Plato recognised only eight of such spheres, the outermost being that of the Fixed Stars. Later, two more spheres were added—the crystalline sphere outside of that of the fixed stars, and, beyond all, the Tenth Sphere, called the *Primum Mobile* or 'first moved,' which contained all the others. In the above passage Milton speaks of the music of the spheres as being produced by the nine Muses that sit upon the nine inner spheres.

(3) Milton seems to have had in view a passage in Plato's *Republic* (bk x). Fate or Necessity has on her knees a spindle of adamant, and the turning of this spindle directs the motions of the heavenly bodies. "The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity, and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren who goes round with it, hymning a single sound and note. The eight together form one harmony, and round about at equal intervals there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne. These are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white raiment and have crowns of wool upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens." In Hesiod the three Fates are thus distinguished. Clotho spins the thread of human life, Lachesis guides it and thus assigns his fate to every man, and Atropos is the fate that cannot be avoided. The last is usually represented with some cutting instrument.

65 vital shears the shears held by Atropos, who cuts the thread of life. Comp *Lyc* 75, where they are called "abhorred shears" see also *Epitaph on M of W* 28.

66 adamantine spindle 'Adamantine' is from the Greek, and means 'that which is unconquerable.' The word 'diamond' is cognate. Milton signifies thus that resistance to the course of Fate is useless. 'Spindle,' the pin or stick from which a thread is spun.

68 sweet compulsion There is a kind of verbal contradiction or oxymoron in these words which renders them very striking. comp *Son*, xxiii 14, *Par Lost*, ix 47, also l 39 above.

69 daughters of Necessity see notes above, l 63.

70 unsteady Nature, i.e. Nature that would otherwise be *unsteady* or not subject to law. 'Unsteady' does not occur else where in Milton's poems.

71 low world, the mundane or terrestrial world, in *Comus* it is "this dim spot which men call Earth." It may be noted here that 'mundane' means literally 'ordered' or subject to law.

measured motion comp Jonson —

"Nature is Motion's mother, as she's yours  
The spring whence order flows, that all directs,  
And knits the causes with the effects"

*Mercury Vindicated*

72 After the heavenly tune, i.e. in accordance with the music of the spheres

which none can hear the construction is, 'which none of human mould can hear' This is an idea which occurs repeatedly in Milton's prose and poetry—that the music of the spheres might possibly be audible to human beings if they lived pure and spiritual lives The Genius of the wood could hear it because he was a good spirit

73 mould, shape or form

with gross unpurged ear comp *Comus*, 458, 997; also *Mid N D* iii 1—

"And I will purge thy grossness so,  
That thou wilt like an airy spirit go"

'Gross' = dense or coarse, 'unpurged' = impure See also *Mer of Ven* v 1

74 blaze a favourite word of Milton's with reference to a person's fame or 'praise', see *Lyc* 74

75 her immortal praise Whose, i.e. the immortal praise of her whose see note, *L'Alleg* 124

76 for her most fit, i.e. (such music were) most suitable for her to hear comp *befits*, l 92

77 hit, produce Contrast its sense in *Il Pens* 14

79 lesser, inferior a double comparative See note, *Il Pens* 51

80 assay, attempt, try In this general sense we now use *essay*, which is radically the same word *Assay* is now used chiefly of the trial or testing of metals

81 And so attend ye, i.e. 'and thus I will escort you towards her glittering seat of state' See note on l 40

state see note on l 14

82 all, that are of noble stem This does not mean, 'all of you that are of noble stem' the words may be rearranged thus, 'Where ye, that are all of noble stem, may approach,' etc 'Stem' = family by a similar figure of speech we speak of 'the branches of a family,' 'a family tree,' etc

83 This line is often referred to as harsh, owing to the number of sibilants introduced This is here mentioned in order that the student may observe how few such lines are in Milton's poetry

84 enamelled, bright This is the radical sense of the word, and that in which Milton uses it As enamelling is generally in colours the word has acquired a secondary sense, 'variegated' 'Enamel' is literally a 'molten like or glass like coating' it is cognate with *melt* See *Lyc* 139

85 print of step, foot-print Comp Com 897, 'printless feet.'

87 warbled string 'Warbled' may be taken either in an active sense (= warbling), or in a passive sense (= made to warble or trill) The participle would, in the latter case, be used proleptically, denoting the result of the action implied in the verb 'touch.' Comp Com 874. "warbled song"

89 branching, wide spreading see note on *L'Alleg* 58

star proof, with foliage so dense that no light can penetrate Comp Par. Lost, ix 1086, "where highest woods impenetrable to star or sunlight," etc also Shelley's *Cloud*, "Sunbeam proof, I hang like a roof" For Milton's use of 'proof' see note, *Il Pens* 153 It has been objected that the elm is not 'star-proof,' its foliage being far from close The references to the elm and the idea implied in 'star proof' are both so common in Milton that he may, by a poetical privilege, have brought the two ideas together without recalling the actual appearance of the tree

91 bring you where, i.e. 'bring you (to the place) where'

93 deity. comp lines 4, 25

94 Such a rural Queen, etc. no such queen has ever ruled in Arcadia. 'Rural' is here used in its strict sense = of the country (Lat *rūris*, the country as opposed to the town)

96 That part of the entertainment which intervened between the second song (sung by the Genius) and the third song (sung by the company) is lost to us The final words of both songs are the same, as if implying that the promise made by the spirit had been fulfilled to the satisfaction of all

97. sandy Ladon's lilled banks Ladon was a river of Arcadia, and the epithet 'sandy' has been applied to it both by Latin and English writers Ovid speaks of the Ladon and the Tiber as sandy (*arenosus*), as Browne and Sidney do of the former

'Lilled,' overgrown with lilies adjectives in *ed* are formed from nouns in two ways; (1) when the noun (as here) has a verbal signification, the participle being used as an adjective, (2) where there is no verbal significance, the suffix being added to the noun, e.g. ragged, wretched, left-handed, etc

98 old Lycæus. a lofty mountain in Arcadia, and one of the chief seats of the worship of Zeus Pan, the chief seat of whose worship was in Arcadia, had a temple on this mountain Hence both Pan and Zeus are surnamed Lycaeus

Cyllene hoar. the highest mountain in Peloponnesus, on the borders of Arcadia, it was sacred to Mercury The word is here a dissyllable, in Greek it is a trisyllable

99 Trip, dance · comp *L'Alleg* 33

twilight ranks 'Twilight' is here used as an adjective (A S *twi*, double) the word strictly denotes 'double light,' but it is used rather in the sense of 'half light' Comp *Il Pens* 133

100 Though Erymanth Erymanthus, a tributary of the river Alpheus (see l 30) the mountain in which it rose was of the same name, but it is so usual in poetry to speak of streams as weeping that we may suppose the river to be referred to here

Grammatically the line is a concessive clause, and the verb is in the subjunctive because it refers to the future, see 'shall give,' next line

101 give ye thanks the meaning is, 'A more fertile soil will reward you for your coming, by pasturing your flocks.' For the use of 'ye' see note, l 40

102 Mænalus, a mountain of Arcadia, so celebrated that in Roman poetry the adjective *Mænalis* is often used as equivalent to *Arcadian* Pan, whose favourite abode it was, is called "the Mænalian god"

104 grace The word may be used here with something of the sense of Lat *gratiam habere*, to be grateful "it will be a more thankful task to serve the queen of this place than to continue to dwell in Arcadia"

106 Syrx an Arcadian nymph, who, being pursued by Pan, fled into the river Ladon, and at her own request was changed into a reed, of which Pan then made his flute (or syrinx) Milton implies that even Syrx might serve this "rural Queen,"—a great compliment to the Countess of Derby, seeing that Jonson in *The Satyr* had likened Queen Anne to Syrx, and that Sponser had addressed Queen Elizabeth as the daughter of Syrx Jonson's masque had been "presented" by the father of the Countess, so that she may possibly have seen it

Pan's mistress Pan was the god of flocks and shepherds among the Greeks as the god of every thing connected with pastoral life he was fond of music, and the inventor of the shepherd's flute He was dreaded by travellers to whom he appeared, startling them with sudden terror Hence extreme fright was ascribed to Pan, and called a Panic fear, this is the origin of the word *panic*

'Mistress,' a woman loved formed from *master* by the suffix

## LYCIDAS.

This poem was written in November, 1637, and appeared in a volume of memorial verses published at Cambridge in 1638 as a tribute to Mr Edward King King, a son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland, had been admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge in 1626, so that he was a fellow-student of Milton's. He was made a Fellow in 1630, and seems to have become extremely popular. He was a young man of 'hopeful parts,' and had shown some skill in poetical composition. In 1633 he took his degree of M A, and remained at Cambridge to study for the Church. In the vacation of 1637 he sailed from Chester on a visit to his friends in Ireland. The ship was wrecked off the Welsh coast and King went down with it. His death was much lamented by his college friends and they got together a collection of tributary verses to which Milton contributed *Lycidas*.

*Lycidas* is a pastoral elegy, i.e. the poet speaks as a shepherd bewailing the loss of a fellow-shepherd. The subjoined analysis will guide the student in reading it. We do not look in the poem for the keen sense of personal loss that we find in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or in Milton's own *Epitaphium Damonis*, nor for the sustained scorn that animates Shelley's *Adonais*, but in its tender regret for a dead friend, in its sweet "touches of idealised rural life," in its glimpses of a suppressed passion that was soon to break forth, and in its mingling of a truly religious spirit with all its classical imagery, it reveals to us the greatness of the poetical genius of Milton. It "marks the point of transition from the early Milton, the Milton of mask, pastoral, and idyll, to the quite other Milton, who, after twenty years of hot party struggle, returned to poetry in another vein, never to the 'woods and pastures' of which he took a final leave in *Lycidas*" (Pattison).

## ANALYSIS

## I The pastoral proper (the poet sings as shepherd)

1 Occasion of the poem, - - - - -	1-14
2 Invocation of the Muses, - - - - -	15 22
3 Poet's personal relations with Lycidas, - - - - -	23-36
4 Strain of sorrow and indignation, the loss great and inexplicable -	
(1) Poet's own sense of loss, - - - - -	37-49
(2) The guardian Nymphs could not prevent it,	50 57
(3) The Muse herself could not prevent it, though he was her true son, - - - - -	58 63
[First rise to a higher mood the true poet and the nature of his reward] - - - - -	64-84

- (4) Neptune was not to blame for the loss. - 85-102  
 (5) Camus, representing Cambridge, bewails his loss. - 103-107  
 (6) St. Peter, the guardian of the Church, sorely misses Lycidas as a true son. - 108-112  
 [Stated in a *Hyperion*.] The false sons of the Church and their coming ruin. - 113-131  
 (7) All nature may well mourn his loss. - 132-151  
 (8) So—*or* loses itself in "false surmise," and Hope craves. - 152-164  
 5. Strain of joy and hope. Lycidas is not dead. - 165-185  
 II. The Epilogue (the poet reviews the shepherd's song). 186-193

## NOTES.

**Monody**, an ode in which a single mourner bewails (Greek *monos*, single; *ode*, a song or ode). *Lycidas* is a typical example of the Elegy, with much of the intense feeling peculiar to the less sustained Ode proper, but its form is that of the Pastoral, and its varied metrical structure is totally unlike that of the modern elegiac stanza.

**height** so spelt in both the editions published in Milton's lifetime, though his usual spelling is 'highth'.

1. Yet once more. These words have reference to the fact that Milton had written no English verse for three years, and that he did not yet consider himself sufficiently matured for the poet's task. The words do not imply that he is once more to write an elegiac poem, as it is here referring back to his poems, *On the death of Mr. Forster* and *On the death of Mr. Hargrave of Worcester*. He is thinking of *Comus* written in 1634.

**Laurels and myrtles** myrtles and ivy are here addressed because they are, in classical poetry, associated with the Muses, and not because the poet thinks them to be specially suggestive of mourning. The laurel has been associated with poetry since the time of the Greeks, who believed that it communicated the poetic spirit: the Romans regarded it as sacred to Apollo. Comp. *Son. xv. 9*.

2. **myrtles bough**. 'Brown' is a classical epithet of the myrtle, in one of his Odes Horace contrasts the brown myrtle with the evergreen ivy. It was sacred to Venus, and at Greek banquets each singer held a myrtle bough.

**ivy never seen, evergreen ivy**: it was sacred to Bacchus, and in *Virgil* we read of the laurel of victory being twined with the ivy. Horace also speaks of ivy as being used to deck the brows of the learned. In Christian art it is the symbol of everlasting life.

'Sore' = dry, withered, the same word as *scar* (A S *searian*, to dry up), and cognate with the verb 'to sear,' i.e. to burn up

3 I come, etc. "I come to make a poet's garland for myself," i.e. to write a poem

harsh and crude, bitter and unripe, because plucked before their due time' this refers to the poet's own unripeness, not to that of *Lycidas*. Milton's 'mellowing year' had not yet come, his opinion was that poetry was a "work not to be raised from the heat of youth" but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge "Crude" is literally 'raw'; hence 'unprepared,' as 'crude salt', and hence 'undeveloped,' c 7 —

"Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself,  
Crude, or intoricate, collecting toys"

*Par Reg 11*

'Cruel' (Lat *crudelis*) is from the same root

4 forced fingers rude On the order of the words compare note on *L. Alleg 40*. 'Forced' = unwilling, not because the poet was unwilling to mourn his friend's loss, but unwilling yet to turn again to poetry 'Rude' comp *Il Pens 136*

5 Shatter your leaves 'Shatter' is a doublet of *scatter*, and here (as in *Par Lost*, v 1063) the former is used where we should now use the latter 'Shatter' suggests the employment of force, and therefore agrees with the sense of the preceding line

mellowing year time of maturity 'Mellow' has here an active sense i.e. 'making mellow' The word originally means 'soft' like ripe fruit, and hence its present use it is cognate with *melt* and *mild* Warton objects to the phrase here used as inaccurate, because the leaves of the laurel, myrtle, and ivy are not affected by the mellowing year the poet, however, is influenced by the personal application of the words, and is thinking of the poetical fruit he was himself to produce

6 sad occasion dear see note on l 4 The original sense of 'dear' is 'precious' (A S *deore*), and hence its present meanings in English, viz. 'costly' and 'beloved' But it is used by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton in an entirely different sense comp 'my dearest foe,' 'hated his father dearly,' 'dear peril,' etc Some would say that 'dear' is here a corruption of *dire*, but this is a mere assumption, though the sense is similar Craik suggests "that the notion properly involved in it of love, having first become generalised into that of a strong affection of any kind, had thence passed on to that of such an emotion the very reverse of love." The fact seems to be that 'dear' as 'precious' came to denote close relation, and hence was applied generally to whatever intimately concerned a person



7 Compels the verb is singular, though there are two nominatives, for both together convey the one idea that, but for the occasion of Lycidas' death, the poet would not have been constrained to write

to disturb your season due to pluck you before your proper season On 'due' see *Il Pens* 155 'Season' is often used to denote 'the usual or proper time', e.g. we speak of fruit as being 'in season,' when it is fit for use, and the adjective 'seasonable' = occurring in good time comp *Son* 11 7

8 ere his prime see note on *L'Alleg* 107 'Prime' here denotes 'the best part of life' contrast its meaning in *Son* ix 1

9 peer, equal (Lat *par*) see *Arc* 75

10 Who would not sing, etc a rhetorical question, equivalent to 'No one could refuse to sing,' etc comp '*Necesse quis carmina Gallo?*' Virgil, *Ec* 1 3 The name *Lycidas* occurs in the pastorals of Theocritus and in Virgil's ninth *Elogue*

knew himself to sing, was himself able to sing, i.e. was a poet Comp Horace's phrase, "*Reddere qui voces jam scit puer*"

11 build the lofty rhyme comp the Lat phrase "*condere carmen*," to build up a song (*Hor Ep* 1 3) 'Build' has reference to the regular structure of the verse: it may also allude to the fact that King had written several short poetical pieces in Latin 'Rhyme' is here used for 'verse', the original spelling was 'rune,' and 'rhyme' does not occur in English before 1550 there is now a tendency to revert to the older and more correct spelling The A S *rim* meant 'number' and *rimcraft*, arithmetic, then the word was applied in a secondary sense to verse having regularity in the number of its syllables and accents, and finally to verse having final syllables of like sound The change of *r* to *h*, and the insertion of *h* is due to confusion with the Greek word *rhythmos*, measured motion Shakespeare has 'rime', and Milton in his prefatory remarks on the verse of *Par Lost* uses the spelling 'rime,' and speaks of it as the "jingling sound of like endings"

13 welter, roll about in *Par Lost*, i 78, Milton speaks of Satan as *weltring* in Hell, in which case the use of the word more nearly accords with modern usage

to, here seems to have the sense of 'in accordance with' comp lines 33, 44 The use of the prepositions in Elizabethan writers is extremely varied.

It will be noticed that there is no rhyme to this line, so with lines 1, 15, 22, 39, 51, 82, 91, 92, 161 But though these lines have no rhymes adjacent to them, they do not detract from the music of the verse there are only about sixty different endings in the whole poem, and if assonantal rhymes be admitted the number is still further reduced Besides, though line 1 has no

adjacent rhyme, similar final sounds occur in lines 61, 63, 165, 167, 182, 183, just as lines 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14 rhyme together. This partly explains the resonance and beauty of the verse.

14 meed, recompense comp "A rosy garland is the victor's meed" *Tit Andron* 1 2

melodious tear, tearful melody, an elegiac poem Comp the title of Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, also *Epitaph on M* of IV 55

15 Sisters of the sacred well, the nine Muses, daughters of Jove they are often mentioned in Greek poetry as the nymphs of Helicon, because Mount Helicon in Boeotia was one of their favourite haunts, on this mountain were two fountains sacred to the Muses, hence Milton's allusion to 'the sacred well' Hesiod, in his *Theogony*, speaks of the Muses of Helicon dancing round "the altar of the mighty son of Kronos," i.e. Jupiter this explains the allusion to "the seat of Jove" (Hales) A simpler explanation is that the sacred well is the Pierian fountain at the foot of Mount Olympus, where the Muses were born, and that the 'seat of Jove' is Mount Olympus

17 somewhat loudly, not too softly

sweep the string, strike the lyre Elsewhere Milton calls music "stringed noise"

18 Hence see note *L'Alleg* 1

coy excuse 'Coy' = hesitating the word is generally applied only to persons in the sense of 'shy', it is the same word as 'quiet,' both being from Lat *quietus*, the former through French. Shakespeare uses it as an intrans verb, and it also occurs in Elizabethan English in the sense of 'to allure'

19 Muse, poet inspired by the Muse hence the pronoun 'he' in l 21 see *Son* 1 13, note Lines 19 to 22 form a parenthesis l 23 resumes the main theme

20 lucky words, words of good luck, words expressing a good wish see note, *Epitaph on M* of IV 31

my destined urn The sense is "As I now write a poem to the memory of Lycidas, so may some one, when I am dead, write kindly words about me." 'Destined urn' = the death that I am destined to die 'urn' is the vessel in which the Romans deposited the ashes of their dead, sometimes inscribed with the name and history of the dead comp 'storied urn,' Gray's *Elegy*, 41

21. as he passes, in passing comp Gray's *Elegy*, 20, 'passing tribute of a sigh'

'Turn,' i.e. may turn, co ordinate with 'may favour' and (may) 'bid,' optative mood

22 bid fair peace, etc 'pray that sweet peace may rest upon me in death' 'Bid,' in the sense of 'pray,' has probably no radical connection with 'bid' = to command, and is nearly obsolete. 'to bid beads' was originally 'to pray prayers' (A. S. *bed*, a prayer). The word *bead* was then applied to the little balls used for counting the prayers, and is now used of any small ball. 'Be' is infinitive see note on Arc 13

sable shroud 'the darkness in which I am shrouded,' previously referred to figuratively as 'my destined urn' Some interpret the words literally = 'my black coffin' Etymologically 'shroud' is something cut off, and is allied to 'shred'; hence used of a garment. In *Par Lost*, v. 1068, Milton uses it in this sense, and in *Comus*, 147 in the general sense of a covering or shelter. Its present uses as a noun are chiefly restricted to 'a dress for the dead' and (in the plural) to part of the rigging of a vessel

23 nursed, etc a pastoral way of saying that they had been members of the same college at Cambridge, viz. Christ's

24 Fed the same flock, employed ourselves in the same pursuits

25 the high lawns comp *L'Alleg* 71

26 Under the opening eyelids etc, i.e. at dawn Morn is here personified comp *Job*, iii 9, "Neither let it behold the eyelids of the morning" Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, ii 3, "the grey eyed morn", see also *Son* 15 The poet represents himself and Lycidas as spending the whole day together, from dawn to sultry noon, and from noon to dewy eve As Warton points out, Milton was a very early riser, both in winter and summer, and the sunrise had great charm for him In this poem, however, he may refer to the fixed hours of college duty

27 We drove a-field The prefix *a* is a corruption of *on*, the noun and preposition being fused together in one adverb see *L'Alleg* 20 'We' is in agreement with 'both,' l 27; and the verb 'drove' may be regarded as transitive, its object 'the same flock' being understood

heard What time, etc There are two possible renderings of this passage (1) 'heard at what time the grey fly,' etc, the object of 'heard' being the whole of line 28, or (2) 'heard the grey fly at what time (she) winds,' etc The latter, though it makes the object of the principal verb also the subject of the dependent verb, is preferable, for in Latin it frequently happens that words belonging to the principal clause are drawn into the relative clause

28 grey fly, the trumpet fly, so called from the sharp humming sound produced by it, generally in the heat of the day, hence the allusion to its "sultry horn"

29 Battening, *sc* 'and afterwards' Battening = feeding, making fat here used transitively, though generally intransitive = to grow fat The same root is seen in *better* In this line *with* = along with, at the time of

30 Oft till the star, etc 'Oft' modifies 'battening' The star here referred to is *Hesperus*, an appellation of the planet *Venus*. see note, *Song on "May Morning"*, l In *Comus*, 93, it is "the star that bids the shepherds fold"

31 sloped his westering wheel similarly in *Comus*, 98, the setting sun is called 'the *slope* sun,' and we read of 'his glowing axle' just as here we read of the star's 'wheel' or course in the heavens 'Westering' = passing towards the west now obsolete

32 rural ditties pastoral language for the early poetic efforts of Milton and King 'Ditty' (Lat *dictatum*, something dictated) originally meant the words of a song as distinct from the musical accompaniment; now applied to any little poem intended to be sung comp "am'rous ditties," *Par. Lost*, l 447

33 Tempered, attuned, timed (Lat *temperare*, to regulate), the word qualifies ditties, and hence the semi-colon at end of l 33 *Masson* has a semi colon at end of l 32, 'tempered' would then be absolute construction, or it would qualify 'Satyrs'

to the oaten flute 'To', see note l 13 The oaten flute is the flute or pipe made of reeds, and the favourite instrument in pastoral poetry in Latin it is *avena* (= oats, a straw, and hence a shepherd's pipe) comp lines 86, 88 'Oaten', the termination 'en' denotes 'made of' modern English has a tendency to use the noun as an adjective in such cases, *e g* a *gold* ring Most of the adjectives in 'en' that still survive do not now denote the material, but simply resemblance, *e g* 'golden hair' = hair of the colour of gold Such adjectives as *birchen*, *beechen*, *firen*, *glassen*, *hornen*, *treen*, *thornen*, etc, are now obsolete

34 Satyrs Fauns, pastoral language for the men attending Cambridge at the same time as Milton and King The Satyrs of Greek mythology were the representatives of the luxuriance of nature, and were always described as engaged in light pleasures, such as dancing, playing on the lute, or *syrinx* (see *Arc* 106), etc The Romans confounded them with their *Fauni*, represented as half men, half goats (Lat *semicaper*), with cloven feet and horns, the chief was *Faunus*, whom the Romans identified with *Pan* (see *Arc* 106)

36 old Damocetas this pastoral name occurs in *Virgil*, *Theocritus*, and *Sidney* it here probably refers to Dr W Chappell, the tutor of Christ's College in Milton's time *Masson* thinks it may be "Joseph Meade or some other well-remembered Fellow of Christ's"

38 Now thou, etc, i.e. now that thou art gone = seeing that thou art gone comp *Son* 11 2

must return. 'must' here expresses certainty with regard to the future = thou wilt certainly never return. In ordinary use it implies either compulsion, e.g. 'He must obey me,' or permission, e.g. 'You must not come in' the latter is the original sense of the A S verb *molan* (past tense *moete*)

39 These object of 'mourn,' l 41 Ovid (*Mel* 11) similarly represents birds, beasts, and trees as lamenting the death of Orpheus

40 gadding, straggling To gad is to wander about idly. Bacon calls Envy a *gadding* passion, and in the Bible we find— "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way," *Jer* 11. Cicero uses the word *erraticus* (wandering) in connection with the vine

41 their echoes, i.e. of the caves comp Song to Echo in *Camus*. In Shelley's *Adonais* the same idea occurs—

"Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,  
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay"

42 hazel copses green See note *L'Alleg* 40

'Copse,' a wood of small growth, is a corruption of *coppice* (*Fr coupe*, to cut)

44 Fanning moving their leaves in unison with the music with 'to' in this line, comp 'to' in lines 13 and 33

45 Lines 45 to 48 are in apposition to 'such,' line 49 thus 'Thy loss to shepherd's ear was such' = 'Thy loss to shepherd's ear was as killing as,' etc. The word 'such' is redundant, being rendered necessary by the separation of the words 'as killing' from the rest of the principal clause

killing, deadly, terrible

canker see *Arc* 53, the more definite form 'canker-worm' is often used, just as 'taint worm' is used in the next line. Warton notes that Shakespeare is fond of this simile

46 taint worm, also called the 'taunt' "There is found in summer a spider called a *taint*, of a red colour, and so little that ten of the largest will hardly outweigh a grain" Browne, *Vulgar Errors*. 'Taint' is cognate with *tint*, *tinge*, and *tincture*

weanling herds, young animals that have just been weaned from the mother's milk. *Ling* is the diminutive suffix, as in *yearling*, *darling*, *foundling*. 'To wean' (A S *uenian*) is strictly 'to accustom to,' but is now used only in the sense of 'to disaccustom to.' The connection between the two meanings is obvious. 'Weanling' also occurs as 'yeanling' or 'eanling'

47 gay wardrobe, bright and varied colours. By metonymy

'wardrobe,' in which clothes are kept, is applied to its contents the flowers are here said to clothe themselves in gay colours 'Wardrobe' = guard robe (*Fr garde robe*) the usual law in such compounds is that the first word denotes the purpose for which the thing denoted by the second is used, *e.g.* inkstand, teaspoon, writing desk

48 white-thorn, hawthorn the flower is sometimes called "May blossom"

19 to shepherd's ear, 'when heard by him' The use of 'killing' is here an instance of syllepsis as applied to the herds, etc. it means literally 'deadly', as used in this line it means 'dreadful'

50 Where were ye, etc This is imitated from the first Idyll of Theocritus, and the tenth Eclogue of Virgil, "but with the substitution of West British haunts of the Muses for their Greek haunts in those classic passages"

romorseless deep, un pitying or cruel sea, an instance of the pathetic fallacy which attributes human feelings to inanimate objects

52 neither This answers to 'nor' in line 53, so that the sense is "You were playing *neither* on the steep *nor* on the shaggy top"

the steep, 'the mountain where the Druidic bards are buried' Milton probably refers to a mountain in Carnarvon, called Penmaenmawr, or to *King's Druidion* in Denbigh, where there was a burying place of the Druids The Druids were the ministers, priests, and teachers among the ancient Celts of Britain in his *History of England* Milton calls them "our philosophers, the Druids" The word 'your' implies that the bards were followers of the Muses

54 shaggy top of Mona high the high interior of the island of Anglesey (known by the Romans as Mona), once the chief haunt of the Welsh Druids The island was once thickly wooded Selden says, "The British Druids took this isle of Anglesey, then well stored with thick wood and religious groves, in so much that it was called *Imr Dowl*, 'The Dark Isle,' for their chief residence" This explains the allusion in the words 'shaggy top'

55 Deva wizard stream, the river Dee, on which stands Chester, the port from which King sailed on his ill-fated voyage In his poem *At a Vacation Exercise* Milton calls it "ancient hallowed Dee" Spenser also speaks of it as haunted by magicians, and Drayton tells how, being the ancient boundary between England and Wales, it foreboded evil fortune to that country towards which it changed its course and good to the other The word 'wizard' is therefore very appropriately used

here In fact these lines (52-55) are interesting for two reasons—(1) their appropriateness to the subject, seeing that King was drowned off the Welsh coast, (2) their evidence that Milton had already been engaged in careful reading of British legendary history with a view to the composition of an epic poem on some British subject—the first hints of which are conveyed in the Latin poems *Mansus* (1638) and *Epitaphium Damonis* (1639) In the former of these we find reference to the Druids, and in the latter to King Arthur

'Wizard' is one of the few survivals in English of words with the termination *ard* or *art*, e.g. sluggard, braggart the suffix had an intensive, and also a somewhat contemptuous force, though here 'wizard' merely denotes 'magical'

56 Ay me! this exclamatory phrase = ah me! Its form is due to the French *aym* = 'ah, for me!' and has no connection with 'ay' or 'aye' = yes Comp Lat *me miserum*

fondly, foolishly comp *Il Pens* 6 and *Son* xix 8

57 There is an anacolouthon or break in the construction in the middle of this line The poet, in addressing the nymphs, is about to say, 'Had you been there, you might have saved Lycidas', but, recollecting that their presence could have done no good, he adds, 'for what could that have done?'

58 the Muse herself Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, and mother of Orpheus, who is here called 'her enchanting son' (see *l'Alleg* 145, note) His grief for the loss of Eurydice led him to treat the Thracian women with contempt, and in revenge they tore him in pieces in the excitement of their Bacchanalian festivals (here called 'the hideous roar') His head was thrown into the river Hebrus, and, being carried to the sea, was washed across to Lesbos, an island in the Ægean Sea His lyre was also swept ashore there Both traditions simply express the fact that Lesbos was the first great seat of the music of the lyre

60 universal nature, all nature, animate and inanimate see note on line 39

61 rout, a disorderly crowd (as explained above) The word is also used in the sense of 'a defeat', and is cognate with *route*, *rote*, and *rut* The explanation is that all come from the Lat *raptus*, broken a 'rout' is the breaking up of an army, or a crowd broken up, a 'route' is a way broken through a forest, a 'rote' is a beaten route or track, hence we say "to learn by rote", and a 'rut' is a track left by a wheel

62 visage, see note on *Il Pens* 13

63 swift Hebrus a translation of Virgil's *volucrum Hebrum* (*Æn* 1 321), supposed to be a corrupt reading, as the river is not swift.

64 what boots it, etc 'Of what profit is it to be a poet in these days when true poetry is slighted' Would it not be better, as many do, to give one's self up to trifling' The passage is of interest, because (1) it illustrates Milton's high aspirations, and (2) it directs our attention to the historical fact that the literary outburst which began in 1580 was over The poets who were alive in 1637 were such as Wither, Herrick, Shirley, May, Davenant, Suckling, Crashaw, etc they could not be compared with Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and others

The word 'boot' (A.S. *bōt* = profit) is now chiefly preserved in the adjective *bootless* = profitless, and in the phrase *to boot* = in addition (where 'boot' is a noun governed by the preposition 'to,' not the infinitive) from this noun comes the A.S. verb *bētan*, to amend, to make better

incessant, incessant The tendency of modern English is to use a prefix belonging to the same language as the body of the word, so that 'cessant,' which is of Latin origin, takes the Latin negative prefix *in* This rule was not recognised in older English, hence in Milton we find such forms as 'inactive,' 'incessant,' and in other writers, 'impossible,' 'unglorious,' 'impatient,' 'unhonest,' etc On the other hand, there are anomalies in our present English that did not exist in the Elizabethan literature, e.g. 'uncertain' (formerly and more regularly 'incertain'), 'unfortunate,' etc comp I 176

65 tend the trans verb (as here) is a short form of 'attend' 'Tend,' to move in a certain direction, is intransitive

homely, slighted, etc These adjectives qualify 'trade, not 'shepherd' 'Trade' here denotes the practice of poetry In lines 113 120 the shepherd's trade is not poetry, but the work of the Church The former application of the words is found in all pastoral poetry, the latter in the Scriptures

In Com 748, Milton gives the derivation of 'homely', 'It is for homely features to keep home', comp Son xii a 20, note Spenser, in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, speaks of the 'homely shepherd's quill.'

66 strictly, rigorously, devotedly

meditate the thankless Muse apply one's self to the thankless task of writing poetry

'Meditate' is here used transitively like the Lat *meditor*, which does not mean merely to ponder or think upon, but to apply one's self with close attention to a subject The phrase occurs in Virgil (*hcl* 1. 2, vi 8) As a transitive verb, 'meditate' has now the meaning of 'purpose', e.g. he meditated revenge



'Thankless,' as applied to the Muse, is 'ungrateful' comp Virgil, *Æn* vi 425

67 Were it not, etc subjunctive mood

use, are accustomed (to do) The present tense of the verb 'to use' is obsolete in this sense we can say 'he used to do this,' but not 'he uses to do this' The present tense is found in the following passage "They *use* to place him that shall be their captain upon a stone always reserved for that purpose"—*Spenser* Compare such words as *ought, must, durst, wot, woul*, etc., all originally past tenses see note, *ll Pens* 37

68 Amaryllis Nerera's hair These are the names of imaginary shepherdesses from the Greek and Latin pastorals (See Virgil's first three *Eclogues*) Milton expresses, in one of his prose works, great fondness for the 'smooth elegiac poets,' but in the last of his Latin Elegies he announces his intention of turning his mind to other subjects—

"Learning taught me, in his shady bower,  
To quit Love's servile yoke, and spin his power "

*Cowper's Translation*

Warton thinks that the allusion to Amaryllis and Nerera is made with special reference to certain poems by Buchanan in which he addresses females by these names

69 tangles, locks or curls, comp Peele's *David and Belshazzar*—

"Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,  
And brings my longings tangled in her hair "

70 Fame is the spur that incites the noble mind to high efforts comp *Par Reg* iii 25—

"Glory, the reward  
That sole excites to high attempts the flame  
Of most erected spirits, most tempered pure  
Ethereal, who all pleasures else despise,  
All treasures and all gain esteem as dross,  
And dignities and powers, all but the highest "

Also *Spenser* "Due praise, that is the spur of doing well "

clear, in the sense of Lat *clarus*, noble, pure 'Spirit' is the object of 'doth raise'

71 This bracketed line is in apposition to 'Fame,' though in reality it is not fame that is meant but the love of fame, which, as Massinger says, is 'the last weakness wise men put off' The idea is found in *Tacitus* "*Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriæ novissima exurit*", and by the use of the word *that* in line 71, Milton seems to signify that he regarded the expression as a well-known one

72. This line states the high efforts to which the love of fame

will incite men, viz, "to scorn delights and live laborious days"

73 *guerdon*, reward grammatically, object of 'find' The formation of this word is peculiar, the second part is from Lat *donum*, gift, and the first part from an old High German word meaning 'back,' and corresponding to the Lat prefix *re* in *reward*, etc

74 *blaze* comp *Arc* 74 and *Par Reg* in 47 "For what is glory but the blaze of fame?" The whole of the passage in *Par Reg*, like this part of *Lycidas*, has a certain biographical interest, for we see here Milton's estimate of the worth of popular applause

75 *blind Fury*, nomin to verb 'comes'

The three goddesses of vengeance were called Furies by the Romans, but Milton's reference to 'the abhorred shears' shows that he is thinking of one of the Fates (see *Arc* 65, note), viz Atropos She is here said to be blind because she is no respecter of persons Milton probably used the word *Fury* in a general sense as signifying the cruelty of Fate, or he may mean to denote Destiny comp Shak *King John*, iv 2, "Think you I have the shears of Destiny"

76 *thin-spun life*, i.e. the thin-spun or fragile thread of life, in allusion to the uncertainty of human life as shown in the case of Edward King For the form of the adjective comp *Il Pens* 66

"But not the praise" Phoebus (i.e. Apollo), as the god of song, here checks the poet, reminding him that though Fate may deprive the poet of life it cannot deprive him of his due meed of true praise The construction is, "Fate slits the thin-spun life, but does not slit the praise" there is therefore a zeugma in 'slits', it is applied to life in its literal sense 'to cut,' and to praise in the sense of 'to intercept'

77 *touched my trembling ears*, i.e. touched the ears of me trembling comp note on *L'Alleg* 124 Masson's acute note on this is "A fine poetical appropriation of the popular superstition that the tingling of a person's ears is a sign that people are talking of him What Milton had been saying about poetic fame might be understood, he saw, as applicable to himself" Comp Virgil's *Eclog* vi 3 The rhymes of lines 70-77 are *ababacac*.

78 'Fame is not found in this life, and dwells neither in the glittering leaf displayed in the world, nor in the wide-spread rumour'

mortal soil, this earth The epithet *mortal* is transferred from life to the scene of life 'Mortal' here denotes 'associated

with death', Milton also uses it in the senses of 'causing death' = fatal, and 'human'

79 Nor nor, neither not common in poetry  
glistening, from the same base as *glisten*, *glitter*, *glint*,  
*gleam*, *glow*

foil, applied to a leaf or thin plate of shining metal placed under a gem to increase its lustre (Lat *folium*, a leaf) so Fame is not a gem that requires to be set off by the use of some foil, it shines by its own light 'Set off' qualifies 'Fame,' not 'foil'

80 Hes, dwells, as often in Old English Comp *L'Alleg* 79

81 by, by means of, i.e. because it is perceived by Comp  
"God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"

82 perfect witness, searching and infallible discrimination  
The old spelling of this word (which is found in Milton) is *perfit*, the French form being *parfait* (Lat *perfectus*, done thoroughly)

83 pronounces lastly, decides finally see *Son* xxi. 3, note

84 meed see line 14, note This ends the sublime strain of Phœbus, which (as Milton says in line 87) "was of a higher mood" than the ordinary pastoral He now returns again to his 'oaten pipe' (see *Analysis*)

85 Arethuse see *Arc* 30 The poet invokes the fountain of Arethusa in the island of Ortygia, off Sicily, because Therothis was a Sicilian, hence the words "Sicilian Muse," l. 133 He also invokes the Mincius, which falls into the river Po, below Mantua in North Italy, because Virgil was a native of Mantua Hence the significance of the words 'honoured flood' and 'vocal reeds'

88 my oat, my pastoral muse The construction is peculiar, 'oat' being apparently nominative to 'proceeds' and 'listens' We may either take the nominative *I* out of the possessive *my*, or suppose that the Muse listens, but see note on *L'Alleg* 122, "judge the prize"

89 the Herald of the Sea Triton, represented by the Romans as bearing a 'wreathed horn' or shell, which he blew at the command of Neptune in order to still the waves of the sea He is here supposed by Milton to appear 'in Neptune's plea,' i.e. to defend him from the suspicion of having caused Lycidas' death by a storm, and to discover the real cause of the shipwreck 'Plea' and 'plead' are cognate words

91 felon, here used attributively The origin of the word is doubtful, its radical sense is probably 'treacherous' (as in this passage) In the ms the poet wrote *fellon*, but this is not, as some think, a different word, though it may be cognate with *fell* = fierce

92 The mark of interrogation at the end of this line and the use of the present perfect tense 'hath doomed,' show that it gives the actual words of Triton's question, otherwise the dependent verb (by sequence of tenses) would have been 'had doomed'

*mishap* · see note, *Epitaph on M of W* 31

93 of rugged wings, 'rugged-winged,' having rugged wings,  
i.e. tempestuous

94 each beaked promontory, each pointed cape Observe the proximity of the words *every* and *each*, where we might have expected *every every*, or *each each* comp *Com* 19 and 311 'Every' is radically = *ever each* (Old English *everoelc*) it denotes each without exception, and can now only be used with reference to *more than two* objects, 'each' may refer to *two or more*

95 They (i.e. the waves and winds) knew nothing of the fate of Lycidas Observe the double or feminine rhymes,—*promontory, story*

96 sage Hippotades, the wise ruler of the winds, *Æolus*, son of Hippotès he brings the answer of the winds to the effect "that not a blast was from its dungeon strayed" 'Hippotadès' is a Greek patronymic, formed by the suffix *-des*, seen in Boreades, son of Boreas, Priamides, son of Priam, etc Comp Homer's *Odyssey*, x 2

97 was strayed in modern English we say 'had strayed', the auxiliary 'have' being now more common than 'be' See note, *Son* ii 6, and comp 'was dropt,' l 191

his dungeon the winds are probably here personified, hence the pronoun 'his' (but see note, *Il Pems* 128) Milton's language here is evidently suggested by Virgil's picture of the winds (*Æn* i 50), where they are represented as confined within a vast cave Virgil there speaks of *Æolia* as the 'fatherland' of the winds, thus poetically endowing them with personality 'Dungeon,' prison, literally 'the chief tower' it is another form of the old French word *donjon*, from Lat *dominionem*, and therefore cognate with 'dominion,' 'domain,' etc

98 level brine, the placid sea 'Brine' denotes salt water, and by a figure of speech is applied to the ocean whose waters are salt

99 Panope and her sister, the daughters of Nereus, hence called Nereids in classical mythology they were the nymphs who dwelt in the Mediterranean Sea, distinct from the fresh-water nymphs, and the nymphs of the great Ocean Their names and duties are given in the *Faery Queene*, iv ll 49, see also Virgil, *Georg* i 437

100 fatal and perfidious bark, the ill-fated and treacherous ship in which King sailed it went down in perfectly calm weather, and hence the force of Triton's plea on Neptune's behalf 'Bark,' also spelt 'barque,' is etymologically the same as 'barge', but the latter is now only used of a kind of boat 'Fatal' = appointed by fate, 'perfidious' = faithless (Lat *per*, away, and *fides*, faith)

101 Built in the eclipse this circumstance is imagined by the poet in order to account for the wreck of the ship, eclipses being popularly supposed to bring misfortune upon all undertakings begun or carried on while they lasted The moon's eclipse was specially unlucky, but in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* we read also of "disasters in the sun," and similarly in *Par Lost*, l 597 An eclipse was supposed to be a favourite occasion for the machinations of witches in *Macbeth*, l 1 we read that "slips of yew slivered in the moon's eclipse" formed one of the ingredients in the Witches' cauldron

rigged with curses dark To rig a ship is to fit it with the necessary sails, ropes, etc., and by a bold figure the poet says that King's vessel was fitted out with curses, at least this is the sense if 'with' be taken to mean 'by means of' Some prefer to interpret 'with' as 'in the midst of,' the sense being that the ship was cursed by the witches while it was being rigged

102 That sunk 'that,' relative pronoun, antecedent 'bark' 'Sunk' = sank, for the explanation compare Morris's *English Accidence*—"The verbs swim, begin, run, drink, shrink, sink, ring, sing, spring, have for their proper past tenses swam, began, ran, etc., preserving the original *a*, but in older writers (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and in colloquial English we find forms with *u*, which have come from the passive participles "

that sacred head of thine This is a pleonastic expression it will be noticed that when the noun denotes the possession of one object only, this form is inadmissible unless preceded by a demonstrative (as here), e.g. we can say 'that body of yours,' because a person has only one body, but we cannot say 'a body of yours,' as this word would imply that one of a number was referred to

'Sacred' etymologically signifies the same as 'consecrated,' 'set apart,' and hence 'devoted' it may be used here of Lycidas as devoted to death comp *Par Lost*, ll 208—"To destruction sacred and devote "

103 Camus "the genius of the Cam River and of Cambridge University was naturally one of the mourners for Lycidas" 'Reverend sire' is an allusion to the antiquity of the University Sire, sir, senior, seignior, and signor all owe their origin to the noun or accus form of the Lat *senior*, elder

went footing slow, passed slowly along, wended his way slowly. As Camus comes forward to bewail Lycidas we should naturally read 'came' in this line instead of 'went,' because in modern English the meanings of 'go' and 'come' are opposed. But it is not so here: *went* is radically the past tense of *wend* (A S *wendan*, to turn), but is now used in place of the obsolete past of *go*, so that it has become necessary to make a new form for the past tense of 'wend,' viz. *wended*. The original past tense of 'go' was 'yode.' *Wend* is the causal form of *wind*, and is therefore peculiarly appropriate to the winding Cam. It is now nearly obsolete except in the phrase 'to wend one's way.'

'Foot' as a verb is generally followed by the cognate accusative 'it,' but it then denotes sprightly movement, and is therefore unsuitable here (see *L Alleg* 33). 'Slow-footing' occurs in Spenser as a compound adjective.

104 His mantle hairy, etc. Here 'mantle' and 'bonnet' are in the absolute case. The 'hairy mantle' is the hairy river-weed that is found floating on the Cam, and the 'bonnet' is the sedge that grows in the river and along its edge. In his first Elegy Milton alludes to the reedy or sedgy Cam (*arundiferum Camum, juncosas Cami paludes*). 'Bonnet,' now generally applied to a head-dress worn by women, here denotes (as it still does in Scotland) a man's cap.

105 Inwrought with figures dim, having indistinct markings *worked into it*. 'Inwrought' is a participial adjective (as if from a verb *inwork*, which is not in use), qualifying 'bonnet' to *work* in figures into cloth, etc., is to embroider or adorn. Milton refers to the peculiar natural markings seen on the leaves of sedge, especially when they begin to wither.

The edge of the 'sedge bonnet' of the Cam is said to be like the edge of the hyacinth because it is marked. The hyacinth was fabled by the ancients to have sprung from the blood of the Spartan youth Hyacinthus, and the markings on the petals were said to resemble the words *ai ai* (alas! alas!) or the letter T, the Greek initial of Hyacinthus: hence the significance of the words 'sanguine' and 'inscribed with woe.' The poet Drummond calls the hyacinth "that sweet flower that bears in *sanguine* spots the tenor of our woes." Similarly Milton fancies that the markings on the sedge may signify the grief of Cambridge for the death of Lycidas.

106 Like to that sanguine flower. Here the preposition 'to' is expressed after 'like' (see note on *Il Pens* 69). 'Sanguine,' bloody, an illustration of Milton's fondness for the primary sense of words (Lat *sanguis*, blood) its present meaning is 'hopeful,' and the connecting link between the two meanings is found in the old theory of the four humours of the body, an excess of the

bloody humour making persons of a hopeful disposition In the primary sense we now use 'sanguinary'

107 *reft* see note on 'bereft,' *Son* *xxii* 3

*quoth* he, he said this verb always precedes its nominative, and is used only in the first and third persons it is really a past tense (though occasionally used as a present), and the original present is seen only in the compound *be queath*.

*pledge*, child comp Lat *pignus*, a pledge or security, also applied (generally in the plural) to children or relations

108 Last came did go see note on *Il Pens* 46

109 The Pilot of the Galilean Lake St Peter, here introduced as Head of the Church, because King had been intended for the Church St Peter was at first a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee (*Matt* iv 18) and became one of the disciples of Christ It was of him that Christ said "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt* xvi 18 *R V*) It was he also whom Christ constituted the Shepherd of the Christian flock by his parting charge "Feed my lambs" (*John* xxi 15) In both of his capacities, as Head and Shepherd of the Christian Church, he mourns the death of one who promised to be a true disciple, unlike the false shepherds who crept into the Church "for their bellies' sake"

110 Two massy keys the keys that St Peter carried as the symbol of his power are usually spoken of as two in number (though there is no such statement in the Scriptures), because he had power both in heaven and hell, the golden one opening the gates of heaven, and the iron one forcibly closing them comp *Com* 13

"that golden key  
That opes the palace of eternity"

'Massy,' massive see note *Il Pens* 58

of metals twain, made of two different metals *twain* (cognate with *two*) is, in older English, used (1) predicatively, (2) when it follows the noun (as here), and (3) as a noun

111 *amain*, with force *a* is here the usual adverbial prefix (see note 1 27), *main* = strength or force, as in the phrase 'with might and main' The adjective *main*, = principal, is only in directly connected with it, being from Lat *magnus*, great 'Ope' for 'open' is found in poetry, both as verb and adjective

112 *mitred* locks, locks crowned with a bishop's head dress, St Peter being regarded as the first bishop of the Church

*stern* *bespake*, said with indignation Milton sometimes used the verb *bespeak* as a transitive verb = to address (a person),

in modern English both these senses are obsolete and it now denotes 'to *speake for*,' 'to engage beforehand'

113 Here for the second time the poem rises far above the ordinary pastoral strain and Milton puts into the mouth of St Peter his first explicit declaration of his sympathy with the Puritans in their opposition to the attempt of Archbishop Laud to introduce changes in the ritual of the English and Scottish Churches, an attempt which hastened the downfall of Charles I and Laud himself see notes on *Son* xiiia, xv, xvi As early as 1584, Spenser had also written in vehement strain against the corruptions of the Church, and there is a faint echo of Spenser's language here and there throughout Milton's indignant lines (See *Analysis*)

spared for thee, etc, i.e. given up, *in return for* you, an ample number of the corrupt clergy

114 Enow here used as in Early English to denote a number, it is also spelt *anow*, and in Chaucer *ynowe*, and is the plural of *enough*. It still occurs as a provincialism in England

such as see *L'Alleg* 29

for their bellies' sake comp *Son* xvi 14, where the reference is to the Presbyterian clergy, here he means the Episcopalian ministers

115 The Church is a sheepfold into which the "hireling wolves" (see *Son* xvi 14), i.e. the corrupt clergy, intrude themselves, their only care being to share the endowments of the Church One of Milton's pamphlets was entitled *The likehest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church* Comp *Par Lost*, iv 192, and *John*, x 12

116 "They make little reckoning of any care other than," etc

117 scramble this word, and 'shove' in the next line, express the eager and rude striving for those church endowments that are here called "the shearers' feast" The 'worthy bidden guest' denotes the conscientious and faithful clergy

119 Blind mouths 'a figure of speech into which Milton condenses the greatest contempt' 'Mouths' is put by synecdoche for 'gluttons,' and 'blind' is therefore quite applicable They are blind guides "whose Gospel is their maw" (*Son* xvi 14) By saying that they scarcely know how to hold a sheep hook or crook (which is the symbol of the shepherd's task) the poet signifies their unfitness for 'the faithful herdman's art,' i.e. for pastoral duty

120 the least, may be regarded as an adverbial phrase modifying 'belongs,' = in the least, or it may be attributive to 'ought'



121 herdman - this spelling, which occurs in the Bible, is not now in use, nor is it that of Milton's manuscript, he wrote 'herdsman,' which is current in the restricted sense of 'one who herds cattle.' Milton applies it to a shepherd, the word being then used generally.

122 What recks it them? = what does it reck them? = what do they care? Here we have an old impersonal use of the verb 'to reck,' which still survives in the adjective *reckless*.

They are sped, they have sped = they have gained their object. For the use of the auxiliary 'are' instead of 'have,' see note on l. 97. One of the early meanings of *sped* is 'success,' and to *sped* is to be successful (as in this line) comp. *Par. Lost*, l. 39. It occurs in older English both of good and ill success, and also in the sense of 'to issue' (Shakespeare has 'God speed the Parliament'), 'to send away quickly,' 'to destroy,' etc.

123 when they list when it pleases them. The verb *list* is, in older English generally used impersonally, and in Chaucer we find 'it thee list' or 'if thee list = if it please thee. It is derived from A S *litan*, pleasure, and survives in the adjective *listless*, of which the older form was *listles*. The noun *list* has lost the meaning it had in A S and still has in German, and now signifies 'longing desire.'

lean and flashy songs pastoral language for 'their teaching, which is without substance or nourishment to their hearers.' Flashy = showy but worthless comp. Dryden "In his wit, and Bacon distilled books are flashy things."

124 Grate, etc. 'sound harshly on their weak and wretched oaten pipes—a description in pastoral language of the preaching of the careless clergy.' 'Grate' and 'scrannel' are here skilfully chosen to express contempt. 'Grate' is the nominative of this verb is 'songs,' the sense being intermediate between the active form, 'they grate their songs,' and the passive, 'their songs are grated.' Hence some would regard this as a middle voice. In Latin and Greek the passive voice arose from the middle or reflexive verb. Comp. *Il. Pen.* 161

scrannel, not found in English dictionaries, being a provincialism = 'learn the harsh sound of the word also suits the passage. Comp. Virgil's *Ecl.* iii. 26

125 The hungry sheep the neglected congregations. Compare Milton's *Epitaph on Davion*—

"Nor please me more my flocks they slighted, turn  
Their unavailing looks on me, and mourn."

126 sworn with wind, etc., with minds filled with unsound and unwholesome teaching  
Comp. *Tran.*

rank = coarse, foul 'dray' = inhale, e.g. to draw breath  
comp *Par Lost*, viii 284, "From where I first drew air" The  
Lat *haurio* has the same sense

127 Rot inwardly, etc, have their hearts corrupted, and disseminate false doctrines

128 Besides The meaning is "While all this injury to the Church is taking place, there is another source of loss to which the English clergy seem to be indifferent, viz the desertions to the Church of Rome that are so frequent"

the grim wolf, the Church of Rome comp *Matt* vii 16, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" Also *Acts*, xx 29, "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock" 'Piny' = secret 'Apace' = rapidly, at a great pace  
comp notes on *amain*, a-field

129 and nothing said Milton may here refer to Archbishop Laud's leaning towards Popery Grammatically, there would seem to be a confusion here between two constructions (1) 'and nothing (is) said,' and (2) 'nothing (being) said' The latter would be the absolute construction, and in Shakespeare it sometimes happens that a noun intended to be used absolutely is diverted, by a change of thought, into a subject, the opposite process may have taken place here

130 two handed engine The sense is, "But the instrument of retribution is ready and punishment will swiftly fall upon the corrupt Church" 'Engine' = instrument, its literal sense being 'something skilful' (Lat *ingenium*, skill) it is therefore cognate with *ingenious*, *ingenuity*, and has been corrupted into *gin* = a snare Comp *Par Lost*, i 749, "Nor did he 'scape by all his engines' (i.e. schemes)

'Two handed' is applied to swords, axes, etc, that require to be wielded with both hands The nature of the instrument that is here called a 'two handed engine' has been much discussed, the various interpretations are —

(1) That it denotes the axe by which Laud was afterwards to be beheaded in 1645, Milton's words being thus prophetic This view may be set aside it certainly did not occur to any one at the time of the publication of *Lycidas*, when the power of Laud was at its height

(2) That the axe is that alluded to metaphorically in the Scriptures as the instrument of reformation see *St Matt* iii 10, "And now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down" In Milton's treatise *Of Reformation in England* he speaks of "the axe of God's reformation hewing at the old and hollow trunk of Papacy" This view is both the most obvious and the most probable

(3) That there is an allusion to the "two edged sword" which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Living One (see *Rev* 1 16)

(4) That the poet refers to the powers of the pure Gospel as contained in the Old and New Testaments

(5) That the English Parliament with its two Houses is meant, "the agency by which, three or four years afterwards, the doors of the Church of England were dashed in"

(6) That it denotes *civil* and *ecclesiastical* power See note on *Son* xvii 12

132 The poet again descends to the level of the ordinary pastoral, though it should be observed that in lines 113-131 he has skilfully adapted pastoral language to an unusual theme The "dread voice" is the voice of St Peter, and it is to this passage that Milton refers in the sub-title to the poem prefixed on its republication in 1645 "In 1638 it had been bold enough to let the passage stand in the poem, as published in the Cambridge memorial volume, without calling attention to it in the title" (Masson)

*Alpheus* see *A1c* 30, note

133 That shrunk thy streams, i.e. which silenced my pastoral muse The figure is a Scriptural one "The waters stood above the mountains, at thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away," *Psalms*, civ 7 'Shrunk' is here used in an active or causal sense = made to shrink, as in the phrase 'to shrink cloth'

*Sicilian Muse*, the muse of pastoral poetry, see note on l 85

134 hither cast, i.e. come hither and cast Compare the Latin idiom, *se in silvas abdiderunt*, "they hid themselves into the woods," i.e. "they went into the woods and hid there," *Ovid* See also l 139

135 bells, bell-shaped blossoms Plants with bell shaped flowers are technically called 'campanulate' (Ital *campana*, a bell)

*flowerets* 'floweret' is diminutive of 'flower'

136 use, dwell, frequent The verb is quite obsolete in this sense comp note, l 67 In Spenser we find, "In these strange ways, where never foot did use."

137 The construction is, "Where the mild whispers of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks, dwell"

138 lap; by a common figure we speak of 'the lap of earth,' 'the earth's bosom,' etc comp Gray's *Elegy*, "Here rests his head upon the lap of earth", also *Rich II* v 2, "the green lap of the new come spring" The word has no connection with 'lap' = wrap (*L'Alleg.* 136)

the swart star sparsely looks, i.e. "where the influence of the burning dog-star is scarcely felt," the flowers being therefore fresh and bright. The swart star is *Sirius* or *Canicula*, a star just in the mouth of the constellation *Canis*, hence called the dog-star (Lat *canis*, a dog). Hence also the term "dog days." To the Greeks and Romans this star appeared at the hottest time of the year, and was by them regarded as the cause of the great heat. It is therefore here called 'swart,' i.e. swart making, because by exposure to heat the face becomes *swarthy* or brown. Milton frequently transfers an epithet from the object of an action to the agent comp "oblivious pool" = pool that makes one oblivious (*Par Lost*, i 266), "forgetful lake," etc. There are four forms of the adjective the earliest is *swart*, then *swarty*, *swarthy*, and finally *swarthy* all four forms occur in Shakespeare.

For the technical sense of 'looks,' comp *Arc* 52. It may be noted that in *Ept Damon* Milton speaks of the evil influence of the planet Saturn upon the fortunes of shepherds.

139 quaint enamelled eyes, i.e. blossoms neat and bright. The centre of a blossom is sometimes called an 'eye', the name is also given to a tender bud or even to a flower (as here). Milton's use of the word 'enamelled' is illustrated in *Arc* 84, and his use of 'quaint' in *Arc* 47, see notes. Comp Peele's *David and Bethsabe*. "May that sweet plain be still enamelled with discoloured (i.e. variegated) flowers."

140 honeyed showers, sweet and refreshing rain. 'Honeyed' is here used figuratively, comp "honeyed words" = flattery. It is sometimes, but less correctly, spelt 'homed' comp *Il Pens* 142.

141 purple, here used as a verb. The meaning is that the spring flowers are so abundant that they give the green turf a purple tint comp *Par Lost*, vii 28, "When morn purples the east." In Latin *purpureus* is common in the sense of 'dazzling'.

vernal, pertaining to Spring (Lat *ver*)

142. Lines 142-151 form (as Masson says) "the most exquisite flower and colour passage in all Milton's poetry." His manuscript shows that he brought it to perfection by additions and after thoughts. "For musical sweetness and dainty richness of floral colour, it beats perhaps anything else in all Milton. It is the call upon all valleys of the landscape, and the banks of all the secret streamlets, to yield up their choicest flowers, and those dearest to shepherds that they may be strewn over the dead body of Lycidas." A similar fancy is found in Shakespeare "With fairest flowers I'll sweeten thy sad grave" *Cymb* iv 2.

Those critics who judge the beauty of any poetical reference to nature by its fidelity to actual fact may readily object that

Milton would here bring together flowers that are never found in bloom at the same time of the year. But the season of the year does not enter into Milton's thoughts except in so far as it enables him to characterize some of the flowers. His only concern is to honour the grave of his fellow-shepherd by heaping upon it a rich offering of nature's fairest and sweetest flowers—flowers that, by their purity or their "sad embroidery," are well fitted to "strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies."

In connection with this passage Mr Ruskin writes—"In Milton it happens, I think, generally, and in the case before us most certainly, that the imagination is mixed and broken with fancy, and so the strength of the imagery is part of iron and part of clay." Lines 142, 145, and 147 he considers 'imaginative', lines 144 and 146 'fanciful', line 143 'nugatory', and line 148 'mixed'.

rather early the root of this word survives in the comparative *rather* comp "The *rather* lambs he starved with cold" (*Spenser*), where *rather* is an adjective. Tennyson has "the men of *rather* and riper years" (*In Memoriam*). *Rather* is now used only as an adverb, except perhaps in the phrase 'I had rather', in 'I would rather' it is certainly an adverb. The Old English *rath*=early (adj.), *ra'he*=soon (adv.).

that forsaken dies, i.e. 'that dies because it is forsaken by the sun light,' a reference to the fact that it is often found in shady places. Milton at first wrote 'unwedded,' showing that he had in mind Shakespeare's words, "Pale primroses that die unmarried ere they can behold Bright Phoebus (i.e. the sun) in his strength" *Winter's Tale* iv. 4. See *Song on M. M.* 1.

143 tufted crow-toe. This plant is more commonly called "crow-foot," both names having reference to the shape of the flower. comp 'bud's foot trefoil,' belonging to the same order of plants. Another similar plant is the *tufted* vetch, and this epithet correctly describes the appearance of all these plants when in flower.

pale jessamine. 'Jessamine' or jessmine, a plant which belongs originally to the East, hence the name from Persian *yasmin*.

144 pink, a flower which has given name to a particular colour, similarly the colour called 'violet' receives its name from the flower, and 'mauve' is the colour of the 'mallow'. The reverse process is seen in 'carnation,' this flower having received its name from its *fleshy* colour (Lat *caro*, flesh). Some varieties of the pink are white.

pansy freaked with jet, a species of violet having generally dark spots in the centre of its blossoms. 'Freaked'=spotted or marked, this word is now little used except in the

diminutive *freckles* = small dark spots (as those on some faces) Shakespeare speaks of the 'freckled cowslip'

146 well-attired woodbine, i.e. the honey suckle with its clusters of flowers 'Well-attired' does not here mean well-clothed or covered with leaves, but 'having a beautiful head-dress of flowers' 'Time' (the prefix being dropped) occurs in the same sense The word is now extended to the whole dress comp *On Time*, 21

147 hang the pensive head 'pensive' is here used proleptically, i.e. it denotes the result of the action expressed by the verb 'hang' comp *Arc* 87

148 sad embroidery, or, as Milton originally wrote, "sorrow's livery," i.e. colours suited to mourning 'To embroider' is strictly to adorn with needlework, hence used in the sense of 'to ornament,' and finally 'to diversify by different colours'

149 amaranthus, a plant so called because its flowers last long without withering In *Par Lost* it occurs as 'amarant,' the adjective being 'amarantine,' which comes directly from the Greek *amarantos*, unfading The word is cognate with 'ambrosia,' the food of the gods, both having their counterpart in the Sanskrit *amrita*, immortal

his beauty shed 'his' here stands for 'its' see note on *Il Pens* 128 'Shed' is the infinitive after 'bid', so is 'fill' in the next line

150 daffadillies, more commonly written 'daffodils' There is also a more colloquial form, *daffadown dilly*, which occurs in Spenser Comp *Par Lost*, ix 1040, "Pansies and violets and *asphodel*" 'Daffodil' and 'asphodel' are the same, both name and thing the initial *d* is no part of the word, and in earlier English it was written *affodille*, which is from an old French word *asphodile*, which again is from the Greek *asphodelos*, a flower of the lily tribe The dew drops resting in the hollow of the lilies are here spoken of as tears shed for Lycidas

151 laureate hearse, the poet's tomb The word 'laureate' here signifies that Lycidas was a poet and was lamented by poets. Another interpretation is that it refers to the fact that King had obtained an academical degree see note on *Son. vi* 9 'Hearse' now denotes the carriage in which the dead are carried to the grave, and even the meaning which Milton here gives it is not the primary one The changes of meaning which this word has shown are (1) a harrow, i.e. a frame of wood fitted with spikes, and used for breaking up the soil, (2) a frame of similar shape in which lighted candles were stuck during church service, (3) a frame for lights at a funeral, (4) a funeral ceremony, a monument, etc., (5) a frame on which a dead body

is laid, (6) a carriage for a dead body, comp *Epitaph on M of W* 58 'Lycid' = Lycidas, the suffix being dropped

152 The sense is 'Let us thus, in order to comfort ourselves for a little, please our weak fancies by imagining that we actually have the corpse of Lycidas to strew with flowers, even while, alas! his bones are being drifted about by the waves'

Some editions read a comma after 'for,' and connect 'so' with 'to interpose' it seems better to read 'so' with 'for,' thus making 'to interpose,' etc., a clause of purpose

154 There is a zeugma in *vash* as applied to 'shores' and 'seas' Comp Virgil's *Aen* vi 362 "my body is sometimes tossed by the waves, and sometimes thrown on the shore" The pathetic allusions in *Lycidas* to King's death at sea may be compared throughout with Virgil's language on the death of the pilot Palinurus, especially in the closing lines of Book v

"O nimum caelo et pelago confise sereno,  
Nudus in ignota, Palmure, jacebis harena"

156 Hebrides, or Western Isles, a range of about 200 islands, scattered along the western coast of Scotland King having been wrecked in the Irish Sea, his body may (according to Milton) have been carried far north to the Hebrides or far south to the coast of Cornwall, these two parts being the extremities of Great Britain

157 *whelming* the compound 'overwhelming' is more commonly used

158 the bottom of the monstrous world, i.e. the bottom of the sea, "there being more room for the marvellous among the creatures of the deep than among the better known inhabitants of the land" 'Monstrous' is therefore here used literally = full of monsters Comp *Par Lost*, ii 624, "Nature breeds, Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things", also Virgil's *Aen* 729, "Quae marmores fert monstra sub aequora pontus"

159 Or whether This would naturally answer to 'whether' in line 156, but there is another anacolouthon, or change of construction, the first 'whether' introduces an adverbial phrase, while the second introduces a complete sentence

to our moist vows denied, i.e. your body being denied to our tearful prayers 'Moist' is properly applicable to the eyes of those praying for the recovery of Lycidas' body There may be an allusion in 'vows' to those promises of thanksgiving and offerings made to Neptune that he might restore the bodies of those who had been drowned Comp *Arc* 6

160 fable of Bellerus old, i.e. the fabled abode of the old Cornish giant Bellerus Bellerium was the Latin name for Land's End in Cornwall, and Milton 'fables' this name to have

been derived from Bellerus, though no such name occurs in the catalogue of the old Cornish giants. There was, however, a giant named Corineus, said to have come into Britain with Brute, and in his first draft of the poem Milton wrote 'Corineus,' not 'Bellerus' (pron *Bellerus*)

161 great Vision of the guarded mount The 'guarded mount' is St Michael's Mount, near Land's End, on which there is a crag called St Michael's Chair. The tradition is that the 'vision' (or apparition) of the Archangel had been seen seated on this crag. Milton, therefore, speaks of the Mount as 'guarded' by the Archangel

162 Looks toward Namancos, etc Namancos is in the province of Galicia, near Cape Finisterre, in Spain (the name being found in old maps). Bayona is also in Galicia. "It was a boast of the Cornish people that there was a direct line of sea-view from Land's End passing France altogether and hitting no European land till it reached Spain" (see map of Europe)

hold = stronghold, castle

✓ 163 Angel, i.e. St Michael, who is here asked to cease looking towards Spain and to turn his gaze to the seas around him, where the shipwrecked Lycidas lies. Some would take 'Angel' as addressed to Lycidas, who would then be regarded as a glorified spirit looking down upon his weeping friends. That this is not the meaning is evident from the language of l 164

ruth, pity see note, Son ix 8

164 dolphins, sea-animals, here alluded to because Arion, an ancient Greek bard, when thrown overboard by sailors on a voyage to Corinth, was supported on the backs of dolphins whom he had charmed by his music

waft, a word generally applied to winds, sometimes also to water, is here used of the dolphins to signify their swift passage through the sea. For 'hapless,' see *Ept on M of W* 31, note

165 The poem here becomes a strain of joy (see *Analysis*), which may be compared with that which closes Milton's other famous elegy on the death of Charles Diodati two years after *Lycidas* was composed. The following extract from the latter (Cowper's translation) will partly enable the student to compare the two pieces—

"Cease then my tears to flow!  
Away with grief, on Damon ill bestowed!  
Who, pure himself, has found a pure abode,  
Has passed the showery arch, henceforth resides  
With saints and heroes, and from flowing tides  
Quaffs copious immortality and joy  
Thy brows encircled with a radiant band,  
And the green palm-branch waving in thy hand,



Thou in immortal nuptials shalt rejoice,  
And join with seraphs thy according voice,  
Where rapture reigns, and the ecstatic lyre  
Guides the blest orgies of the blazing quire "

woful, also spelt 'woeful'

166 your sorrow, object of your sorrow, by synecdoche the name of a passion or emotion is often put for the object that inspires it, e.g. joy, pride, delight, care, hope, etc

is not dead, i.e. he lives in Paradise

167 watery floor, the surface of the sea comp "level brine,"  
l 98, and the Lat *aequor* (a level surface) applied to the sea  
Shakespeare calls the sky the "floor of heaven"

168 day star, the sun, which, to one looking seaward, seems to sink, at setting, into the ocean Comp Com 95—

"And the gilded car of day  
His glowing axle doth allay  
In the steep Atlantic stream "

169 anon, after a short time, i.e. at sunrise Comp *L'Alleg*  
131

repairs his drooping head, renews his brightness

170 tricks, here used transitively in the sense of 'to display'  
see *Il Pens* 123, note

new spangled ore, bright golden rays 'Ore' = metal, the newly-risen sun being like a ball or disc of gold 'Spangled' = sparkling a spangle is strictly a small plate of shining metal used as an ornament, and hence in poetry it is common to speak of the stars as spangles, and of the sky as 'spangled with stars' Comp Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, iv. 5. see also *Par. Lost*, xi 128

172 So The meaning is, 'As the sun sinks into the sea in the evening but rises again in the morning with renewed beauty, so Lycidas sank low into the sea, but rose again through the saving power of Christ, to take his place in Paradise

'Sunk' = sank see l 102, note

173 the dear might of Him, etc = the power of that dear Saviour over whom the waves of the sea had no power Milton thus appropriately illustrates Christ's power by a reference to that one of his miracles which shows his rule over the waters  
(See *Matt* xiv 22

'Walked' here used transitively, comp *Il Pens* 156

174 Where, i.e. 'mounted high (to that place) where,' etc  
along, a preposition governing 'groves' and 'streams'

175 His locks that were wet with the sea ooze he washes with the pure nectar of heaven.

'Oozy,' slimy, 'ooze' is the soft mud found at the bottom of the sea. 'To ooze' is to flow gently, as ooze would do.

'Nectar,' the drink of the gods. In *Death of a Fair Infant*, Milton speaks of the "nectared head" of a goddess, and in *Par. Lost*, he tells us that there is a "nectarous humour" in the veins of the angels.

176 unexpressive nuptial song, i.e. inexpressible marriage song. see *Rev* xix 9, where all true believers are spoken of as bidden to the marriage feast of the Lamb of God. In the two preceding lines the language of *Lycidas* is that of classical mythology, in this line and the six following, the imagery is Christian, and then the poet reverts to mythology. "We might say that these things are ill-fitted to each other. So they would be, were not the art so fine and the poetry so overmastering, were they not fused together by genius into a whole so that the unfitness itself becomes fascination" (*Brooke*).

'Unexpressive' both Shakespeare and Milton use adjectives with the termination *-ive* where we now use *-ible* or *-able*. Comp. incomprehensive, plausible, insuppressive, etc., occurring in Shakespeare. For the prefix *un-* see note on l 64 above. The word 'unexpressive' has therefore, in modern English, become *in-expressible*. 'Nuptial' is from Lat. *nubere*, to marry, comp. 'connubial'.

177 For the order of the words comp. *L'Alleg* 40  
kingdoms meek, abodes of the meek

178 'There all the saints above entertain him'

179 sweet societies. What Milton here calls 'sweet societies' of angels, he calls (in *Par. Lost*, xi 80) 'fellowships of joy'. Milton believed in a complete angelic system, with a most elaborate division into orders and degrees of rank—a system widely recognised in mediæval Christian tradition. In *Par. Lost* he makes large use of this belief, in this poem it is merely hinted at.

181 The language of this line is taken from the Scriptures. see *Isaiah*, xxv 8, and *Rev* vii 7, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

for ever, once and for all

182 This line is to be compared with line 165

183 the Genius of the shore. see *Arc* 25, 26, *Il Pens* 154. It is common in Latin poetry to represent a drowned person as becoming the genius or guardian spirit of the locality where he met his fate, his office being to prevent future voyagers from a like disaster, hence Milton says, "(thou) shalt be good (&c. propitious) to all that wander," etc. The Latin *bonus* occurs in the sense of 'propitious,' Virgil's *Ecl* v 64.

184 In thy large recompense, i.e. as a great recompense to thee "The use of the possessive pronouns and of the inflected possessive case of nouns and pronouns was, until a comparatively recent period, very much more extensive than at present, and they were employed in many cases where the preposition with the objective now takes its place" (*Marsh*)

185 wander in that perilous flood, i.e. sail over that dangerous sea

186 The epilogue begins here (see analysis) its separateness from the rest of the poem is indicated by the fact that in it Milton lays aside his "oaten flute" and resumes his own personality, and by the metrical and rhyming structure of the eight lines of which it consists. It is, in fact, a stanza in *Ottava Rima*, the arrangement of rhymes being *abababce*

uncouth see note, *L'Alleg* 3

187 with sandals grey, i.e. at the grey dawn Comp "grey-hooded even," Com 188 The shepherd had begun to sing at daybreak, but in his eagerness he had continued till evening

188 He touched the tender stops of various quills, i.e. throughout his song he had passed through various moods and had sung in various metres 'Quill' is here used in its primary sense = a reed, which Milton has already called 'oaten pipe' the application of this word to the feather of a bird is secondary The 'stops' of a reed or flute are the small holes over which the fingers of the player are placed, also called vent-holes or (as in Shakespeare) 'ventages' comp Com 345, "pastoral reed with oaten stops" The epithet 'tender' is here transferred from the music itself to the stops, from the effect to the cause

189 thought, care comp *Matt* vi 25, "Take no thought for your life," etc

Doric lay, pastoral song so called because Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus wrote their pastorals in the Doric dialect of the Greek tongue see note on *L'Alleg* 136

190 'The sun, being low, had lengthened the shadows of the hills' Comp Virgil, *Ecl* i 83

191 was dropt, had dropt see note, l 97, and *Son* ii 6

192 twitched, plucked tightly around him

his mantle blue The colour is that of a shepherd's dress, hence the allusion It is very improbable that any allegorical sense is intended

193 To-morrow, etc comp the *Purple Island*, by Fletcher—

"Home, then, my lambs the falling drops eschew  
To-morrow shall ye feast in pastures new"

## SONNETS

Milton's sonnets are of interest not merely from the circumstances of their composition and from the subjects of which they treat, but also from the fact that they are, in metrical structure, closer to the Italian type than those of any other English poet. The sonnet came to us originally from Italy, and hence Milton speaks of it as the Petrarchian stanza. It is a poem of fourteen decasyllabic lines, the first eight forming the octave, and the remaining six the sestet. The octave consists of two quatrains, and has its rhymes arranged thus—*a b b a, a b b a*. In the strict Italian type, a pause or break in the thought occurs at the end of the octave, but this rule is often disregarded by Milton. The rhymes of the sestet are less strictly governed by rule, and the first three forms employed by Milton (see subjoined metrical table) are all common in the sonnets of Petrarch, Dante, Tasso, and Vittoria Colonna. Ariosto chiefly follows what is here called Milton's first form. In the Italian sonnet a final rhyming couplet was not allowed, and Milton uses it only once (*Son. xvi*) in Spenser and Shakespeare, on the other hand, this rhyming couplet is always present. The sonnet must be absolutely complete in itself and must be dignified and full of strength. It must be the direct expression of some *real* emotion, of some incident that has stirred the poet's soul. Judged by these requirements Milton's sonnets are seen to be worthy of the form in which they are cast, they are not fanciful expressions of some simulated feeling, but are straightforward, majestic and impassioned. Wordsworth might well say of the Sonnet that, in Milton's hands, "the thing became a trumpet, whence he blew soul animating strains,—alas ! too few !"

## METRICAL ANALYSIS.

- 1st form *a b b a, a b b a, c d c, d c d* —  
 Sonnets *i, viii, xi, xiv, xviii, xxii, xxiii*  
 2nd form *a b b a, a b b a, c d e, c d e* —  
 Sonnets *ix, x, xvi, xix, xxi*  
 3rd form *a b b a, a b b a, c d e, d c e* —  
 Sonnets *ii, xiii*  
 4th form *a b b a, a b b a, c d d, c d c* —  
 Sonnets *xii, xv*  
 5th form *a b b a, a b b a, c d c, e e d* —  
 Sonnet *xx*  
 6th form *a b b a, a b b a, c d d, c e e* —  
 Sonnet *xvi*  
 7th form *a b b a, a b b a, c d e, d e c, c f f, f g g* —  
 (*tailed*) Sonnet *xii*

The Italian sonnets (III-VII.) are of course, omitted from this edition. As a guide to the student we give a classification of the sonnets according to the nature of their subject (see Stopford Brooke's *Milton*, Classical Writers series) —

- I *Personal* I, II, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII
- II *To women* IV, V, XIV, XV
- III *Controversial* XI, XII, XIII
- IV *Political* XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII

### SONNET I

The title is printed in brackets in the text, because it is not found in either of the two editions (1645 and 1673), superintended by Milton himself comp also *Son* II, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII. There is no means of dating this sonnet precisely but it is placed first by Milton himself, and must be referred either to the close of the Cambridge period or to the beginning of the Horton period (i.e. about 1631). It shows that Milton had even in his first efforts at sonnet-writing, resolved to adhere to Italian metrical models.

1 O, nightingale Milton's fondness for this bird shows itself in *Il Pens* 61-64, *Comus* 234, 566, and elsewhere. It arrives in England about the middle of April. Poets generally (as here) refer to it by the feminine gender, perhaps on account of the story of Philomela (see *Il Pens* 61), but it is the male that is the song bird — he sings on till the young are hatched in the month of June.

yon bloomy spray For 'yon' see note, *Il Pens* 52. 'Bloomy' strictly denotes 'blooming' i.e. covered with blossom, but if it is objected that the trees are not in blossom in April, it may be interpreted to mean 'covered with buds,' i.e. about to burst into blossom. For the termination *y* (=A.S. *ig*), comp 'massy,' *Il Pens* 158. 'Spray' = sprig (which is radically the same word), implies the breaking up of a branch into a number of twigs, just as 'twig' itself (from the same root as *two*) implies a small shoot branching off from a larger one.

2 Warblest, art accustomed to warble The present here denotes not what is actually taking place, but what frequently takes place.

when all the woods are still, when all the other songsters have ceased comp *Il Pens* 61.

3 fresh hope, i.e. renewed hope

4 the jolly hours lead etc, i.e. 'while the bright hours herald the approach of the happy month of May' The Horae (or Hours) of classical mythology were regarded as the goddesses

of the Seasons, whose course was described as the dance of the Horae. The Hora of Spring accompanied Persephone every year on her ascent from the lower world, and the expression "The chamber of the Horae opens" is equivalent to "The Spring is coming". The attributes of Spring—flowers, fragrance, and the bloom of youth—are accordingly transferred to the Horae.

'Jolly', the original sense is 'festive,' and this would suit the sense here, in *Com* 986, Milton calls the Hours 'rosy-bosomed'. In Chaucer, Spenser and others, 'jolly' is used in the sense of the French *joli*, =pleasing, pretty, in modern English it means merriness, and implies boisterous mirth.

propitious May. May is here called propitious (i.e. favourable) because it was regarded as favourable to love, "whose month is ever May," *L L L* 11 3. The literal sense of 'propitious' is 'flying forward,' a meaning which points back to the time when the Romans judged omens to be good or bad according to the flight of birds.

5 liquid, smooth-flowing, sweet. 'Notes' is nominative to 'portend'.

the eye of day. The song of the nightingale is so sweet that it lulls the day to sleep. *Comp Lyc* 26, *Com* 978,

"Where day never shuts his eye"

6 First heard. This line forms a participial clause, doing duty for a temporal clause introduced by 'when'. In Latin this construction is frequent.

before the shallow cuckoo's bill, i.e. before the unmusical notes of the cuckoo are heard. 'Shallow' here expresses contempt, as in *Son* 1112 12, in the same way we speak of sounds as being *thin* or weak. 'Bill' = song, by synecdoche the source of the song is put for the song itself. The name of the bird is said to be derived from the sound made by it. *comp Lat cuculus*, Sansk *lokila*, both imitative.

7 Portend, foretell. The nightingale and the cuckoo were regarded as rival heralds of Spring. It was a superstition that to hear the cuckoo before the nightingale betokened unhappiness for lovers.

8 have linked, subjunctive mood, as 'foretell,' *l* 10

amorous power, power over the affairs of lovers (*Lat amor* = love). This is an instance of transference of attribute. 'amorous' can strictly be applied only to persons.

9 timely sing, sing in good time (i.e. be not too late as you have hitherto been). 'Timely' is now used as an adjective, here it is an adverb. *comp Com* 689, 970, 'timely rest' (adj.), 'timely tried' (adv.)

bird of hate 'Of hate' is here used passively = hated  
The cuckoo is feared and hated by the smaller birds

11 As, since, here introduces an explanatory clause, giving the cause of the poet's request

*too late* For my relief, i.e. too late to be able to relieve me  
An adjective preceded by the adverb *too* is often followed by a gerundial infinitive or a prepositional phrase, which is equivalent to an adverb and modifies the adjective. The prepositional phrase corresponds to the Lat. *ad* with the gerund

12 yet hadst, etc., i.e. yet thou hadst no reason why (thou shouldst have sung so late). The word 'yet' (= nevertheless) introduces an independent clause, and marks a contrast. 'Why,' along with the understood clause, is an attribute to 'reason'

13 call, name is here singular and in subjunctive mood. Its two objects are 'thee' and 'mate'

his mate the use of the pronoun *his* implies reference to the nightingale by the feminine gender, as usual, but it makes Muse masculine, which is unusual. comp. *Il Pens* 47, *Lyc* 19

14 Both them In modern English *both*, when used with pronouns, is treated either as an adjective or as a substantive. In the former case it follows the pronoun, e.g. *them both*, in the latter case 'of' is inserted, e.g. *both of them*. The latter use is, strictly speaking, not logical, for 'of' gives a partitive meaning, as in 'six of them,' 'a few of them' whereas in 'both of them' there is no reference to a part, but to the whole. This is avoided in Latin, where 'all of us' is 'we all' (*nos omnes*), 'how many of you were there?' is 'you how many etc.?' (*quot estis?*). When *both* is used with nouns there is greater choice of arrangement, e.g. 'both brothers,' 'both of the brothers,' 'both the brothers,' and even 'brothers both'

of their train For this use of *of*, comp. *L'Alleg* 38, and for 'train,' see note on *Il Pens* 10

## SONNET II.

Milton was twenty-three years old on the 9th of December, 1631 this fixes the date of the sonnet, the last he wrote while at Cambridge. By the time he took his degree of M.A. (1632) he had given up all intention of entering the Church, and on account of this decision a friend ventured to remonstrate with him. The reply was a letter accompanied by this sonnet, which Milton described as a Petrarchian stanza. In fact, nearly seventy of Petrarch's sonnets have the same metrical structure as this has

1 How soon, exclamatory, not interrogative

subtle thief of youth Time is so called because youth passes away imperceptibly: with this phrase compare Young's "procrastination is the *thief* of time," and Pope's "Time, the *thief* of life," etc

2. Stolen the verb is 'hath stolen,' and its object is 'year' 'Steal' here implies that the twenty third year had been completed, not, as some think, that it had begun

three-and twentieth this is a compound ordinal numeral in such cases it is the final member of the compound that takes the ordinal suffix; comp 'twenty-*third*' with 'three-and-*twentieth*'

3 full career comp the use of 'full' in the phrases 'at *full* speed,' 'in *full* swing,' etc

4 no bud or blossom shew'th, i e gives no sign of inward fitness Comp 2 *Hen IV* i 3—

"As in an early spring  
We see the appearing buds which to prove fruit  
Hope gives not so much warrant as despair  
That frosts will bite them

Here *shew'th* rhymes with *youth* comp *II Pens* 71

5 my semblance, etc., i e 'perhaps my outward appearance belies the fact that I have arrived so near manhood, and maturity of mind may be much less evident in me than in some more fortunate natures' Comp *Par Reg* iii 131

6 That I near 'That' here introduces a substantive clause in apposition to 'truth', in l 8 'that' is a relative introducing a clause attributive to 'ripeness'

am arrived It is more usual in modern English to say 'have arrived' With some intransitive verbs of motion (e g to go, come, arrive, enter) either of the auxiliaries *be* and *have* is used, in Elizabethan writers both forms are common thus 'I *am* arrived' expresses my present state, while 'I *have* arrived' expresses the activity which preceded the present state This distinction of meaning is not now strictly observed, and the auxiliary 'have' is in general use (See Abbott's *Shal Gram*)

8 timely happy, fortunate with regard to time See note, *Son* i 9

endu'th=endoweth, of which it is an older spelling It is from Fr *endouer* (Lat *in dolare*), to give a gift to cognate words are *dowry*, *endowment* It has no connection with *indue*, which means 'to clothe with' (Lat *in-duere*) The words are often confused

9 be it less or more In this line 'or' occurs three times, there being two pairs of alternatives—'*whether* it be less or



more,' and 'whether it be soon or slow' In the first case 'whether' is understood, in the second 'or' = *whether* (a cognate word)

10 It shall be still, etc., it shall in any case be strictly in proportion to the lot for which Heaven intends me We have here Milton's deliberate statement of his intention to become a great poet The word 'shall' is emphatic

even, equal, in proportion to an adjective

11 mean, humble (Ger *gemein*, common) The adjective mean = middle is a totally different word, being from Lat *medius*

12 will of Heaven, sc 'leads me'

13 All is, etc This may mean 'all is even,' or 'all that concerns me', 'my first consideration is to use my powers as one who is conscious that God constantly sees and judges my work'

14 Task Master's eye This is in allusion to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (*Matt* 20), in the letter which accompanied this sonnet Milton says, "Those that were latest lost nothing when the Master of the vineyard came to give every man his hire" Compare the closing lines of *Son* 212

Sonnets 111 to 116 are in Italian

## SONNET VIII

The title is Milton's own This sonnet is inspired by his high conception of the poet's task and of the power that lies in the name of a great poet to avert disaster and to requite those who honour the Muses It was written in November, 1642 The battle of Edgehill was fought in October of that year, and the royal army then marched to attack London This was the 'assault' expected, and Milton, having been an active pamphleteer on the side of the Parliament, might naturally have feared that his house would not escape the Royalists if they succeeded in entering the city The 'assault' never took place, for the royal army retreated when the parliamentary army, under the Earl of Essex, moved out to meet it

1 Colonel is here a trisyllable, though usually a dissyllable It is from the Ital *colonello*, the leader of the little column (i.e. at the head of a regiment) It has no connection with Lat *corona*, a crown (*S'eat*)

Knight in Arms, a title conferred on persons of high rank as a recognition of military prowess See *Shak Rich II*, 3

2 Whose chance This is a peculiar construction, which may

be resolved into 'whose lot it may be to seize' It implies doubt, not that the house will be seized, but as to the particular officer that may seize it

these defenceless doors The word 'these' is used because the sonnet was written as if to be affixed to the door of Milton's house, it would thus be a mute appeal to the besiegers

3 ever, at any time, on any occasion

4 him within, etc, 'protect from injury him that is within'

5 He can requite thee, i.e. the poet can reward you by rendering you famous "in his immortal verse" Comp Shakespeare's *Son* 81—

"Your monument shall be my gentle verse"

'Requite' is literally the same as 'repay,' from *re* and *quit*=freed or discharged

charms, magic verses comp *Il Pens* 83 and note

6 call, 'bring down or bestow fame on such honourable acts as these,' viz guarding the poet's house and protecting him

8 Whatever clime These words are in apposition to 'lands and seas' 'Clime' (comp *Com* 977) is radically the same as 'climate,' and here used in its original sense=a region of the earth 'Climate' has now the secondary sense of 'atmospheric conditions'

The meaning of the line is, 'Wherever the sun shines'

9 the Muses' bower, poetical language for 'the poet's house', comp *Lyc* 19

10 Emathian conqueror, Alexander the Great (the Sikander of Indian history), king of Macedonia, of which Emathia was a province.

bid spare see note *Arc* 13

11 house of Pindarus Pindar (B.C. 522-442), the greatest lyric poet of Greece, was said to have been born at Thebes, this city had been subdued by Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, on whose accession the Thebes attempted to recover their liberty (B.C. 336) Alexander, to punish them, destroyed the whole city with the exception of the temples and Pindar's house

temple and tower Some legends affirm that the temples were not destroyed

12 repeated air, i.e. the air or chorus having been recited The adjective here is not a mere attribute, but has the force of an adverbial clause giving the circumstances under which the event took place 'the air had the power to save Athens, because it was repeated' Comp the Latin use of participles and of clauses with *qui* and *quippe qui* in such cases

13 *sad Electra's poet*, Euripides (B.C. 480-406), here called "sad Electra's poet" because in one of his tragedies he deals with the history and character of Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon, and because it was a chorus from this tragedy that moved the Spartans to spare Athens. Euripides (like Homer and Ovid) was one of Milton's favourite classical authors.

The adjective 'sad' is sometimes taken as qualifying 'poet,' Euripides having been of a serious and austere disposition such an arrangement of the words would not be allowable in modern English, though there would be no ambiguity in Latin. The more obvious reading is to refer 'sad' to Electra, who, owing to the murder of her father by her mother, often bewails her sad lot.

14 *To save*, etc. The Spartans took Athens, B.C. 401, and deliberated as to how the city should be dealt with. It was proposed by some to destroy it utterly, but a Phocian singer having recited part of a chorus from the *Electra* of Euripides while the decision was still in suspense, the hearers were so moved that they agreed it would be dishonourable to destroy a city that had given birth to such great poets.

## SONNET IX

This sonnet, written probably in 1644, has no title in Milton's editions, and we have no certain clue to the name of the lady addressed in it.

1 *Lady, that*, etc. The relative 'that' here introduces an essential characteristic: the full nominative of address occupies the first four lines of the sonnet, the principal verb (*hast chosen*) occurring in l. 6. The relative occurs four times in this sonnet, in three cases next to its antecedent, and in one case separated from it by being placed at the end of the principal clause: the latter is a frequent arrangement in Milton, comp. *Son. ii* 8, *xi* 11.

*prime*. The words 'prime' and 'earliest' together emphasise the early choice made by the lady (Lat. *primus*, first). 'Earliest,' very early, the superlative being merely intensive (as often in Latin) see note, *Il Pens.* 12.

2 *the broad way and the green*, the broad and green way. This sonnet is full of Biblical imagery comp. *Matt.* vii. 13, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." By calling it green as well as broad, Milton signifies that the way of the sinful is not merely easy to travel, but attractive.

When two adjectives refer to one object, this arrangement of words cannot be imitated e.g. 'the broad way and the green' would, in ordinary prose, imply that there were two ways, one green, the other broad.

3 with those few, i.e. in company with the few referred to in *Matt vii 14*, "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" 'Those' is therefore used demonstratively

art eminently seen, i.e. thou art conspicuous 'Eminently' is here an essential part of the predicate, 'to be seen eminently' = 'to be seen to be eminent' (Lat *eminens*, standing out)

4 That labour, etc Comp *Hamlet*, i 3—

"Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
While, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads"

5 The better part, etc i.e. thou hast chosen, as Mary and Ruth did, the better part, viz., devotion to God and heavenly things The poet here likens the lady to two women mentioned in the Scriptures as having made a similar choice Mary and Martha were two sisters, of whom the latter was troubled about worldly affairs, while the former had "chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (*Luke x*) Similarly Ruth, the Moabitess, refused to leave her mother in law, saying "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (*Ruth*, i)

6 overween, think arrogantly, think too highly of themselves The word, though frequent in Milton, is now nearly obsolete except as a participial adjective, 'overweening' = conceited, arrogant It is from the verb *ween*, to suppose, think, now obsolete except in the parenthetical clause 'I ween' (A S *weanan*, to imagine)

7 fret their spleen, become spiteful or ill-humoured The old theory of "humours" placed the seat of anger and ill-humoured melancholy in the spleen, a spongy gland situated above the kidneys, hence a spiteful person is said 'to have the spleen' or 'to be splenetic' Shakespeare uses the adjectives 'splenitive,' 'splenful,' and 'spleeny' So in Latin *stomachus* was used for ill-temper comp 'melancholy,' *L'Alleg* l 'Fret,' to excite, literally 'to eat away' (A S *fretan*)

8 No anger find in thee, i.e. they do not excite your anger, but your pity

pity and ruth 'Ruth' = pity It is not uncommon to find in poetry two nouns of the same sense thus connected by *and* this is sometimes to give emphasis, and sometimes it points to a usage rendered necessary when the Normans settled in England It "sprang out of the mutual necessity felt by two races of people and two classes of society to make themselves intelligible the one to the other It is, in fact, a putting of colloquial formulae to do the duty of a French-English and an English-French vocabulary" 'Pity' is the old Fr *pit  *, from Lat *pietas*

(from which our word *piety* is directly derived) 'Ruth,' now obsolete (except in poetry and in the adjective *ruthless* and its derivatives), is from the verb *rue*, to be sorry for (A S *hredwian*)

The word here rhymes with *Ruth* in l 5, an instance of what is called an *identical rhyme*, which is not now tolerated in English poetry. Such rhymes occur occasionally in Chaucer and Spenser, and twice in Shakespeare

'Pity' and 'ruth' are objects of the verb 'find'

9 Thy care is fixed comp *Psalm cxvii* 7

zealously see note, *L'Alleg* 6

10 odorous lamp The lady is here likened to the five wise virgins of Scripture (*Matt* xxi) who, unlike their foolish sisters, were careful to take oil in their vessels with their lamps when they went out to meet the Bridegroom, and so were able to gain admittance to the marriage feast 'Odorous' = fragrant

deeds of light, i.e. good deeds Comp *M of Venice* "So shines a good deed in a naughty world", also *Matt* v 18, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works"

11 hope, etc Comp *Romans*, v 5, "Hope maketh not ashamed"

be sure Thou, etc, i.e. be sure (that) thou hast gained

12 Bridegroom, in allusion to the parable of the Ten Virgins (see l 10) The word is from A S *bryd*, bride, and *guma*, man the *r* in 'groom' is due to confusion with A S *gromc*, a groom, which is a totally different word

feastful, festive 'Feastful,' a hybrid word, is now obsolete, being one of a large number of adjectives formed by means of the word *full* and now disused, e.g. *charmfull*, *despairfull*, *excessfull*, etc 'Feast' is from Lat *festus*, joyful, there are two derived adjectives in common use—*festal* and *festive*, of which the terminations are of Latin origin

13 mid hour of night, hour of midnight

14 Hast gained The sequence of tenses here should be observed In the dependent clause we have a *present* (*passes*), and in the principal clause a *perfect* (*hast gained*) the sense is, 'at the moment the bridegroom passes to bliss, at that very moment thy entrance is complete (i.e. has been gained)'

#### SONNET X.

This was written in 1644 or 1645, it is the latest of the sonnets printed in the edition of 1645 Phillips, the nephew and biographer of Milton, relates that during the time the poet was

deserted by his first wife he "made it his chief diversion now and then of an evening to visit the Lady Margaret Ley This lady, being a woman of great wit and ingenuity, had a particular honour for him, and took much delight in his company, as likewise Captain Hobson, her husband a very accomplished gentleman" Both she and her father are in this sonnet complimented on their political views

1 that good Earl James Ley, born 1552, was made Lord High Treasurer of England in 1624, and Lord President of the Council in 1627 Both these offices are alluded to in the sonnet "He had been removed from the High Treasurership to the less laborious office of President of the Council, ostensibly on account of his old age, but really, it was thought, because he was not sufficiently compliant with the policy of Charles and Buckingham He died in March, 1628-9, immediately after the dissolution of Charles's Third Parliament, and, as the sonnet hints, his death was believed to have been hastened by political anxiety at that crisis" (Masson)

The construction 'Daughter to that good Earl' should be noticed, the preposition *of* is commonly used

once President 'Once' is here an adverbial adjunct to 'President,' for when a noun stands in attributive relation to another noun, it may be modified by adverbs It is not necessary, therefore, to explain 'once' as an adverb modifying 'was' understood

2 her, i e England's

3 in both unstained, i e not having, in either of these offices, sullied his reputation by taking bribes 'Fee' is from the A S *feoh*, cattle, property, now used of the price paid for services see note, Son xii 7

4 more in himself content This does not mean that he resigned of his own accord, but that, "when dismissed, he went willingly" the construction is, "(being) more content in himself (than in the enjoyment of office)"

5 sad breaking There is here a play upon the word 'break' applied in l 5 to the dissolving of Parliament, and in l 6 to the effects of this upon the old Earl In the former sense we speak of the breaking up of an assembly, and in the latter of a person's spirits or health being broken Milton calls the dissolution of Charles's third Parliament a sad one, because it showed that the King had entered upon that line of conduct which led to the Civil War The demonstrative *that* implies that the Parliament referred to is too well known to need further mention comp l 8

6 as that dishonest victory, etc, i e in the same way as the

victory at Chaeronea broke the heart of Isocrates. The word 'dishonest' is here used in the sense of Lat *inhonestus* = dishonourable in the same way our word 'honesty' has not the high sense of the Lat *honestas* = all that is honourable. Milton calls the victory dishonest because it was 'fatal to liberty' in it Philip of Macedon defeated the combined Athenian and Theban forces, B.C. 338, Greece thus losing her independence. Chaeronea was a city of Bœotia.

8 with report 'With' = by means of. The use of the instrumental *with* is not now so common as in earlier English, and is never used to denote the agent. In Chaucer we find "slain *with* (= by) cursed Jews."

that old man eloquent, Isocrates, one of the most famous of Greek orators, who, at the age of ninety nine, died four days after hearing the report of the disaster at the Chaeronea. So the good Earl of the sonnet died four days after the dissolution of Parliament.

9 Though later born, etc., "though I was born too late to have known your father at his best, yet, methinks, I am able from seeing you to judge what he was like." Milton does not mean that he was born after the Earl's death, for the Earl died twenty years after Milton's birth.

*Than* in this line is a conjunction introducing an elliptical clause depending on *later*. It is difficult to give a satisfactory syntactical explanation of such clauses. We may expand it into, 'Though I was born later than (I should have been in order) to have known' see note on *than*, Son. xii 2.

10 by you, through or by means of you

11 methinks, it seems to me. Here *me* is the dative, and *thinks* is an impersonal verb (A.S. *thincan*, to appear), quite distinct from the verb 'I think,' which is from the A.S. *thencan*, to cause to appear. For a similar relation compare *drink* with *drench* (= to cause to drink).

yet. In this line *yet* = up to the present time, in the previous line *yet* = nevertheless.

13 That all both judge you. *That* here introduces a clause of consequence in adverbial relation to *well*, and co-ordinate with *so* comp. "He spoke so fast that I could not understand."

*Both* in this line is strangely placed. The ordinary form would be 'All judge you *both* to relate them (i.e. your father's virtues) truly, *and* to possess them.' The co-ordinate words are *relate* and *possess*. The one is preceded by *both*, the other by *and*.

## SONNET XI

The two sonnets (x1 and x11) and a few Greek verses are all the poetry that Milton wrote in 1645, they were probably written after the publication of the first edition of his *Minor Poems* in that year. These two sonnets breathe the air of controversy, into which Milton had thrown himself since 1641. His desertion by his first wife in 1643 had turned his attention to the question of Divorce, and in August of that year he published a pamphlet entitled *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Restored*. This was followed by other three tracts, viz *The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*, *Tetrachordon*, or *Expositions upon the four chief places in Scripture which treat of Marriage*, and *Colasterion a Reply to a Nameless Answer against the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Owing to these pamphlets Milton was regarded by many as the propounder of doctrines that were calculated to undermine morality and destroy the beauty of social and family life. The Presbyterian divines were especially severe on him, and from this time he was generally regarded as having gone over to the ranks of the Independents. His wife returned to him in 1645, probably before these two sonnets were written, so that he was the better able to throw ridicule upon those who had regarded him as lightly estimating the sanctity of married life.

1 writ, written All verbs of the strong conjugation originally formed their past participles in *en* owing however to a tendency (very common in Elizabethan writers) to drop the suffix, many strong verbs have now two forms of the past participle, e.g. chid, chidden, bid, bidden, bit, bitten, writ, written, while others have lost the form in *en* altogether, e.g. spit

of late, lately comp the adverbial 'of old,' 'of yore,' etc

**Tetrachordon** This Greek word means 'four-stringed' applied to this pamphlet because it expounded four passages of Scripture

2 woven close, etc Here Milton characterises his own prose style, and indicates correctly its most striking features, viz. close reasoning and involved yet scholarly syntax, due largely to his use of Latin constructions. The 'matter' refers to his arguments, the 'form' to their arrangement, and the 'style' to the diction employed.

both strictly speaking, *both* and should couple only two notions, but Milton sometimes uses them to join more than two comp "The God that made *both* sky and earth and heaven"

3 The subject new This may be taken absolutely it is equivalent to an adverbial adjunct of cause, the meaning being,



"Because the subject was novel, the book attracted readers, but when the novelty wore off, it was little read" The punctuation would, however, justify the reading, "The subject (was) new" see note, *Il Pens* 25

walked the town awhile, i.e. was circulated and read throughout London for a time 'Awhile' = for awhile (A.S. *hwil* = time)

4 Numbering, reckoning or estimating the Lat *numero* is sometimes used in this sense The meaning is that the book, from the close texture of its thought and language, was a test of the reader's ability

now seldom pored on, now seldom carefully read In modern English we say 'to pore over,' and the passive form is not used 'Pored on' rhymes with 'word on' and 'Gordon,' and line 7 ends in the middle of a word we can only suppose that Milton takes these liberties because the sonnet is written in a jocular mood and with the intention of ridiculing his detractors Yet Dr Johnson afterwards quoted this piece as a representative specimen of an English sonnet'

6 some in file, i.e. some passers-by stand, one looking over another's shoulder, so long that, while they are trying to spell out the title, one could walk to Mile End Green

7 false, adverb comp 'close,' 1 2, and note, *L'Alleg* 56

Mile End Green "a locality in Whitechapel, about the distance which its name indicates from the central parts of the City of London, and the common terminus in Milton's time of a staid citizen's walk in that direction" (Masson)

8 Why, exclamatory 'Is it harder?' is a rhetorical question meaning 'It is not harder to pronounce,' etc

Gordon, Colkitto, Macdonnel, Galasp these, which are in Milton's opinion as 'rugged' as the name of his own book, are all Scottish names, chosen because they were borne by men who had fought under the Marquis of Montrose on behalf of King Charles George, Lord Gordon, had been slain in one of Montrose's battles, the other three names all refer to one person, viz Alexander Macdonald son of Colkittoch, son of Gillespie, son of Alexander, son of John Catanach He was a powerful Highland chief, called Colkittoch because he was left handed (from a Gaelic word) Galasp is Milton's corruption of Gillespie, there was a Scottish Presbyterian divine of this name, and the poet, as an Independent, may have meant to ridicule him as well as the Highlander

10 rugged. Milton originally wrote 'barbarous,' then 'rough-hewn'

our like mouths, i.e. mouths like ours In the former

phrase 'like' is an adjective, in the latter it has the force of a preposition. The explanation is that in Latin both would be translated by the adjective *similis* = like, e.g. *similis sui* is either 'like himself' or 'his like'

grow sleek, lose their ruggedness

11 made Quintilian stare. This line forms an attributive clause to 'names' see note on Son 11

The names were so uncouth that Quintilian, the most famous of Roman rhetoricians, would have been astonished if he had heard them. Quintilian (A.D. 40-118) in his *Institutes* lays great stress on the judicious choice of words as an element of style, and there is no doubt that Milton also here expresses his own dislike of the guttural sounds and other peculiarities of the Scottish tongue.

12 like ours, as ours does. The words form an adverbial adjunct to l. 13, "thy age did not hate learning as ours does." If the words be taken as qualifying 'age,' they must be equivalent to 'unlike ours.'

Sir John Cheek (1514-1557). He was the first Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and afterwards tutor to Edward VI, he is here mentioned probably because he had been a member of a commission appointed by Parliament to codify church law (including the law of divorce).

13 worse than toad or asp, i.e. worse than (it hates) toad or asp. Instead of 'hate worse' we ordinarily say 'hate more'. An asp is a venomous serpent.

14 taught st. The verb *to teach* takes two objects. (1) 'Cambridge and King Edward,' and (2) 'Greek.'

## SONNET XII

This is a more indignant, and less jocular sonnet than the preceding.

1 to quit their clogs. 'Then' is used because it refers to the individuals living in the 'age' or period.

'Quit,' to give up, leave. The clogs or hindrances referred to are the restrictions upon divorce which Milton wished to see removed.

2 By, by means of

the known rules, etc, i.e. "before divorce was restrained by ecclesiastical and other laws."

straight see note, *Unw. Carrier*, II 10, and *L'Alleg* 69

barbarous noise, i.e. clamour raised by vulgar and ignorant

persons Comp the language of *Par Reg* iii 49, "And what the people but a heid confused, A miscellaneous rabble," etc

4 Of owls and cuckoos, etc Milton purposely chooses animals whose cries are unmusical One editor thinks Milton may have seen a painting in which the Spanish poet, Lope de Vega, is represented as calmly engaged in writing while surrounded by dogs, monkeys, etc This sonnet shows, however, that Milton had not altogether preserved his own equanimity

5 those hinds The reference is to a fable told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* When Leto, called Latona by the Romans, fled from the wrath of Juno, she took in her arms her 'twin-born progeny,' Apollo and Diana being fatigued, she attempted to drink of the water of a small lake in Lycia, but was prevented by rustics who railed at her In her distress she prayed for help, when the rustics were immediately turned into frogs Hind is from A S *huan*, domestics

7 after, afterwards

held the Sun and Moon in fee, Apollo being the god of the Sun, and Diana goddess of the Moon Milton may here hint that he also, in spite of present detraction, hoped to make a great name for himself 'To hold in fee' is to have absolute right "An estate *in fee simple* is an unqualified inheritance in land unlimited in its duration as to descent" Comp Wordsworth "Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee"

8 this is got, etc, i.e. this is the result of laying great thoughts before the vulgar Comp *Matt* vi 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine" 'Pearl' is here singular, because used generically

9 bawl for freedom Comp Tennyson

"He that roars for Liberty

Faster binds a tyrant's power — *Vision of Sin*

11 Licence Liberty In his *Tetrachordon* Milton wrote, "The Exposition here alleged is neither new nor licentious, as some now would persuade the commonalty, although it be nearer truth that nothing is more new than those teachers themselves, and nothing more licentious than some known to be, whose hypocrisy yet shames not to take offence at this doctrine (i.e. *Liberty of Divorce*) for Licence, whereas indeed they fear it would remove licence and leave them few companions"

12 who loves that (i.e. Liberty), etc In *Tenure of Kings*, Milton says, "None can love freedom heartily but good men, the rest love not freedom but licence" 'Who' is the subject of 'loves,' and the first clause 'who loves that' forms the subject of the second it is now usual in such cases to use the compound relative *whoever* The position of *who* at the beginning of the

clause is due to the fact that it was originally used only as an interrogative pronoun

13 *rove* To shoot *at rovers* was to shoot without any particular aim A 'rover' was a kind of arrow

14 For all this waste We may explain 'for' as = 'in spite of,' a meaning which it often has when followed by 'all' 'All,' however, is not an adjective qualifying 'waste,' as is seen by expanding the phrase into 'For all that his waste of wealth could do' Comp Shakespeare, "For all he be a Roman"; and *Hymn Nat* 73

### SONNET XIIIa

This is a true sonnet of 14 lines, *plus* a tail or 'coda' of six lines both parts are constructed according to the rules strictly observed by Italian writers The tone of the piece is Anti-Presbyterian Parliament had resolved in 1642 that government of the Church by archbishops and bishops was inconvenient, but the ordinance for the abolition of these 'prelates' was not passed by the Commons till October, 1646 The Presbyterians in Parliament then called for the suppression of all religious sects that were not in sympathy with the Presbyterian form of Church government and Milton, as an Independent, taunts them with being "the new forcers of conscience" He regarded religious intolerance as equally monstrous, whether under a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian system

1 Prelate Lord, government of the Church by archbishops and bishops A 'prelate' is strictly one placed over others (*Lat præ*, before, *latus*, borne or brought)

2 stiff vows, inflexible decisions

renounced his Liturgy, given up the Episcopal form of service The Liturgy is the Book of Common Prayer, the reading of which was, in 1644, prohibited even in private families severe penalties were incurred by those convicted under this law 'Liturgy' is the Greek *leitourgia*, public service

3 To seize, etc, i.e. in order that you might seize upon the endowments left vacant by some of the clergy Milton was disgusted with the eagerness with which Presbyterian divines scrambled for vacant offices, it showed, as he thought, that their dislike of Episcopacy arose from envy, not abhorrence

Plurality, the holding of more than one ecclesiastical living, one who does so is a *pluralist* By the phrase "widowed whore" Milton refers to the Church as deprived of its prelates, and at the same time signifies that the holding of profitable

offices by the clergy was distasteful to him Comp Son vii  
and *Lyc* 113 118

5 ye, see note, *Ar* 40

adjure the civil sword, i.e. solemnly call upon the civil  
power to aid you

7 ride, override

Classic Hierarchy, ecclesiastical government by *Classes*.  
The *Class* or *Classis* was the name given to the small Presby-  
terian court of each parish, and when Episcopacy was abolished,  
the Presbyterians wished to establish the Scottish system of a  
gradation of Church Courts. The Independents, on the contrary,  
thought that each congregation should be independent. 'Classic'  
is not now used in this primary sense, in '*classic works*,' '*Greek*  
and Roman *classics*' it refers to literature of the highest class.  
'Hierarchy, sacred government (Greek *hieros*, sacred, *archon*,  
to rule, seen in *archbishop*, *archangel*, etc.)

8 mere A S and Rutherford Adam Stewart and Samuel  
Rutherford, two Scottish Presbyterian pamphleteers who  
vigorously opposed the Independents. The former published  
his pamphlets under the initials A S. Rutherford was Professor  
of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, and sat in the  
Westminster Assembly.

'Mere' (Urit *mixtus*=unmixed, pure) In Elizabethan writers  
it often occurs in the sense of 'unadulterated' Comp Mas-  
sing's *Virgin Martyr* "Thou art a mere I am an O, I am an  
as"

9 intent see note *Ar* 34 Trench points out that in earlier  
English 'to intend' meant 'to be actually and earnestly engaged  
in doing,' having no reference to the future as it now has.

Milton here takes the Apostle Paul as his type of a good  
preacher

11 heretics No word could better illustrate Milton's mean-  
ing, it strictly denotes 'one who makes a choice,' and the poet  
held that every man must choose for himself what to believe.  
But the word has come to be applied in reproach to all who, in  
matters of religious belief, are in opposition to established and  
widely accepted opinion. Such persons are also said to be  
'heterodox,' which originally meant 'thinking differently from  
others', it now means 'differing from the majority,' and hence  
'unsound' or 'objectionable.'

12 shallow Edwards comp Son i 6 and *Ar* 41 it expresses  
contempt. The Rev. Thomas Edwards, a London preacher, had  
attacked the Independents in a wretched pamphlet in which  
Milton is branded as a heretic for his views on divorce.

Scotch What d'ye call The Scotchman here referred to is

(Prof. Masson thinks) Robert Baillie Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, who had in 1645 attacked Milton for his opinions on divorce. The poet signifies that the attack had made little impression on him: he cannot even remember his opponent's name. He thus consigns him to oblivion.

14 *packing* The meaning is. The meetings of the Westminster Assembly of Divines were more unfairly constituted by the exclusion of Independents than were those of the famous Council of Trent by the exclusion of Protestants. The Council was held at Trent in Austria-Hungary from 1545 to 1563 for the purpose of taking measures against the Reformation. We speak of a 'packed meeting, a 'packed' jury, when endeavours are made to secure undue weight for one side of a question.

15 Here follows the 'coda' of the sonnet, forming one long adverbial clause of purpose or result.

16 *with shears*, i.e. by depriving you of your powers, and thus restoring the wholesome influence of toleration. For use of 'their' see *Son. xii. 1*.

17 *Clip your phylacteries, etc.*, i.e. check your Pharisaical pretensions to superior holiness though not inflicting upon you that physical suffering which you would fain inflict upon 'heretics'.

The phylactery among the Jews was a slip of parchment inscribed with passages of Scripture, worn on the left arm or forehead. see *Matt. xxiii. 5*.

*banck your ears*, cheat your ears of their deserts by sparing them. The modern spelling is *blind* to hinder, to cheat, used in such phrases as 'to be *blind* of one's design'. Milton hints at the fact that punishment by mutilation was not uncommon in his day. William Prynn, a Presbyterian, had had his nose and ears cut off for writing against Episcopacy and against the theatre in the time of Laud.

18 *succour our just fears*, relieve us from the fears that now, with good reason, possess us. 'Just' = justifiable. 'Succour' is here co-ordinate with 'clip'.

19 *they, the Parliament.*

*in your charge* in the charge or accusation against you, when the party of toleration comes into power.

20 *New Presbyter old Priest*. There is a double allusion here. (1) literally, the word *priest* is merely a contraction of the Greek *presbyteros* elder; compare such pairs of words as *diamond* and *adamant*, *fancy* and *phantasy*, *palsy* and *paralysis*, *slander* and *scandal*. (2) the new Presbyterian was characterised by the same intolerant spirit as the Episcopalian or even as

the Roman Catholic The same allusion occurs in *Areopagitica*, written a year before this sonnet

In Com 322 and 748 Milton in a similar way connects the meaning of a word with its derivation

writ large Here also the two meanings appear, (1) *Presbyter* is a longer word than *Priest*, and (2) the name implied, to Milton, even greater intolerance For 'writ' see Son xi 1

### SONNET XIII

This first appeared as a recommendatory piece prefixed to *Choice Psalms, put into Music for Thrice Voices, composed by Henry and William Lawes, Brothers, and Servants to His Majesty* (1648) The title of the book shows that Henry Lawes was a Royalist, but this sonnet indicates that the poet had not allowed a difference of political opinions to weaken his friendship with the musician a common love of music united the hearts of the two men Moreover, the sonnet was a spontaneous tribute of regard, and had been written two years before Lawes' book was published Lawes wrote the music of *Arcades* and *Comus*

1 Harry. This familiar form of address strikes the key-note of personal affection

tuneful and well-measured song Lawes was remarkable for his success in setting songs to music "He communicated to verse an original and expressive melody, he exceeded his predecessors and contemporaries in a pathos and sentiment, a simplicity and propriety, an articulation and intelligibility which so naturally adapt themselves to the words of the poet" This extract explains the allusions to Lawes' music in the sonnet, e g 'tuneful,' 'well measured,' 'just note and accent,' 'smooth air,' etc.

2 span, measure

3 just note and accent, the melody being suited to the words, and the accent of the music corresponding to the accent of the language

to scan With Midas' ears, i e to mismatch the melody and the words in a stupid manner The verb 'taught' has here, as its second object, two infinitive clauses—'how to span' and 'not to scan' See note, Son xi 14

'Midas' ears,' i e ass's ears, denoting want of intelligence This is in allusion to Midas, the King of Phrygia, who had been appointed judge in a musical contest between Apollo and Pan, and decided in favour of the latter Apollo, indignant, changed his ears into those of an ass

4 committing short and long, bringing together short and long syllables (which correspond roughly to what we call unaccented and accented syllables) *Commit* has here the sense of Lat *committere*, to match, to bring together, it never really had this sense in English. Shakespeare uses 'commit' in the sense of 'transgress,' but this is not the meaning here

5 exempts thee, etc., distinguishes you above all other musicians, redeems you from mediocrity Comp Horace, *Od.* 1 1, *secernunt populo* 'Exempts is singular, although the subject is 'worth and skill' - these form one idea

6 enough for Envy, etc., sufficient to cause the envious to turn pale A similar idea occurs in *Arc* 11-13, compare also "wrinkled care," "spare Fast," etc

7. shalt be writ thy name shall be handed down to posterity as that of the man who, etc. Compare the use of *write* in the phrase "Write him down a traitor" The Lat *scribo*, to write, occurs in this sense—

"*Scriberis* Vario fortis et hostium  
"Victor" Horace, *Carm* I 1 32

8 couldst humour couldst best suit your music to the English tongue To humour a person is to adapt one's mood to his

10 priest of Phoebus' quire, the leader of the choir of Phoebus (Apollo), the god of song and music For 'quire,' see *Il Pens* 162. Poets are often described as forming the choir of Apollo, Homer having been inspired by that god 'Their,' in l 11, refers to the poets forming his choir, Lawes having set to music short poems written by a large number of well-known authors

11. happiest lines 'Happy' = well-expressed. See *Eynt on M of W* 31, and comp *Lyc* 92.

hymn or story The story referred to is that of *Ariadne* by Cartwright (1611-1643), set to music by Lawes

12. Dante . Casella. In his *Purgatorio*, canto 11, the poet Dante tells how, after emerging from Hell into Purgatory, he saw a vessel freighted with souls come to be purged of their sins and made fit for Paradise, among them he recognised one of his friends, Casella, a Florentine celebrated for his skill in music

13 wooed to sing, pleaded with to sing Dante asked Casella to sing some soothing air to console his spirit, and Casella complied by singing one of Dante's own songs

14 Met Purgatory Purgatory is called 'milder' by comparison with Hell it was the place or state in which souls were purified or purged (Lat *purgare*, to make pure) Dante tells how, on arrival at the gate of Purgatory, his forehead was



marked with seven P's (= *percala*, sins), one of which he would lose at every stage until he reached the river which divided Purgatory from Paradise

'Met' is a participle qualifying 'whom,' and line 14 is equivalent to a subordinate clause. This is the Latin use of the participle.

#### SONNET XIV

Nothing more is known of the lady addressed than what is supplied in the heading. It will be observed that, as in Sonnet ix. (which is also addressed to a virtuous woman), the poet makes frequent use of Scriptural phraseology. Its date is 1646

1 parted from thee never, which never left you *never* is emphatic

2 ripened, brought to perfection. The verb is here used in an active sense. In Son. ii 7, 'ripeness' is similarly used to denote moral growth

to dwell with God grammatically, denotes the extent of the action expressed by 'ripened' Comp *Psalms* cxiii 6

3 earthly load of death. Human life is fleeting, and is here called a "load of death" Comp *Rom* vii 24, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death"; also *1 Cor* xv 49; see also note, *Il Pens* 92

4 from life doth sever which separates us from eternal life. This mortal life is only life so called, the future and immortal life is true existence

5 Thy works and alms Comp *Acts*, x 4 "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God"

The history of the word 'alms' illustrates how the form of a word may gradually come to disguise its origin. It is singular, not plural, and comes through Latin from the Greek *eleemosyne*, this became in A S *almasse*, then *almes* (two syllables), and finally *alms*. It has thus dwindled from six syllables to one

good endeavour, i.e. good deeds. In modern English it would mean well-meant or good efforts, whether successful or not. Here it means duty actually performed, being from Fr *dévoir*, duty, and the verbal prefix *en*

6 nor in the grave, etc. they were not forgotten after your death. Contrast this with the lines in Shak *Julius Caesar*—

"The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is oft interred with their bones"

7 golden rod. Faith is here represented as pointing the way to heaven by means of a golden rod. In poetry saints are often represented as bearing wands or rods.

8 Followed *i.e.* your good deeds followed you to heaven 'For ever' is in this line an attributive adjunct to 'joy and bliss' = eternal.

9 knew them best Thy handmaids . knew them best to be thy handmaids = knew best that they were thy handmaids A comparison of these two renderings will show that such verbs as 'know, 'say, 'think' may have as their object either a substantive accompanied by an infinitive or a substantive clause The former is a Latin idiom, and is frequent in Milton, it is not so common in English as it was *e.g.* in Anglo-Saxon we find 'They say him live,' *i.e.* 'They say *that* he is alive'

11 that, etc so that, having been thus beautified, they flew up to God's presence

12 speak. The earlier editions read 'spake,' but the present tense implies that the good deeds of the lady *still* plead for her at the judgment-seat

13 thenceforth, from that time onwards this adverb modifies 'rest,' not 'hid' For 'hid' used as a past, comp *Arr* 13

14 drink thy fill, etc Comp *Psalms* xxxvii., "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures," alluding to the waters of eternal life

Grammatically, 'thy fill' may be taken to denote the extent of the action implied by the verb some, however, regard it as a cognate object

### SONNET XV

This, and Sonnets xvi, xvii, and xviii, were not published in Milton's lifetime their references to Pre Restoration politics did not allow of their publication in the second edition of the *Minor Poems* (1673) The siege of Colchester occurred during what is called the *Second Civil War*—a rising of the English and Scottish royalists on behalf of Charles I., then a prisoner in the Isle of Wight The siege was conducted by the commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary armies, the third Lord Fairfax, and lasted more than two months (1648), during which time the inhabitants endured all the miseries of famine Fairfax was a great general, a poet and a man of culture, and Milton's sonnet is a tribute to his success on a particular occasion and to his high character

1 *name in arms, reputation as a soldier* The poet here speaks of Fairfax's European reputation as a commander in almost the same words as he speaks of his own reputation as a pamphleteer in *Son* xxiii

2 *Filling* This is an example of syllepsis, the word 'filling' being applied to 'mouth' and to 'monarchs' in different senses

3 her, Europe's

amaze, amazement consternation an allusion to the effect that the doings of Parliament would have on the minds of other kings besides Charles

The word 'amazement' is a hybrid, *amaz* (= in a maze) being Teutonic, and the suffix *ment* Romance. Many words originally used both as verbs and nouns, exist only as verbs, e.g. *amaze*, *excite*, *retire*, all of which occur in Milton in both uses

4 daunt, see *Il Pens* 137

5 virtue, valour see *Il Pens* 113, note.

ever brings Victory home "Though the credit of the parliamentary triumph has been popularly attached to the greater name of Cromwell, it was to Fairfax that it was in great measure due" (*Pattison*)

6 new rebellions This sonnet having been written during the siege of Colchester, the poet must be referring to the various outbreaks which together form the Second Civil War—in Wales, Kent, Essex, and the west of England

7 Their Hydra heads It was one of the labours of Hercules to destroy the monster Hydra—it had nine heads, and as each head was struck off two new ones grew forth in its place hence the epithet 'hydra headed' applied to a rebellion, an epidemic, or other evil that seems to gain strength from each endeavour to repress it

false North the meaning is, 'Though Scotland, having broken her alliance with the Parliament, renews the war on the pretext that the English have failed to observe the *Solemn League and Covenant*' This is Milton's view of the matter.

8 to imp their serpent wings, i.e. 'to strengthen the English royalists, as a hawk's broken wing is *imp'd* or strengthened by the insertion of new feathers' Euripides speaks of the monster Hydra as a winged serpent

An 'imp' is properly a graft, or shoot, and was applied in a good sense to the scions or younger members of a family Except in its technical sense in falconry (as in this line) it is now applied only in an uncomplimentary sense, e.g. to a troublesome child, a wicked spirit, etc

9 yet a nobler task, i.e. a yet nobler task

10 still breed, continue to breed 'But' in this line = except

12 public faith public fraud 'Public' = in public affairs. The reference is to the fact that the army leaders (chiefly Independents) charged the Parliament (chiefly Presbyterians) with misappropriation of the war funds, and with having taken bribes from royalists.



7 *Darwen stream*, this falls into the Ribble near Preston in Lancashire, where Cromwell routed the Scots in 1648 (see *Son xv*)

*Imbrued*, stained This is an unusual application of the word, as its literal sense is 'soaked' or 'moistened' Both *imbrue* and *imbue* are originally from a Latin root meaning to drink in or imbibe *imbue* is usually applied to material objects, and *imbrue* to a person's mind, language, etc

8 *Dunbar field* The battle of Dunbar (Sept 3, 1650), in which Cromwell defeated the Scots, they were not crushed, however, and Cromwell had to march south as far as Worcester before he finally overthrew the royalists 'Resounds' is singular, it may be repeated with each of its three nominatives

9 *Worcester's laureate wreath* The battle of Worcester was fought on the 3rd of September, 1651, the anniversary of Dunbar On the same day, seven years later, Cromwell died Hence Byron's allusion to "his day of double victory and death" He called Worcester his 'crowning mercy', hence Milton's allusion to the laureate wreath 'Laureate,' composed of laurels, a token of victory The title 'Poet Laureate' arose from an ancient university custom of presenting a wreath of laurel to graduates in rhetoric and poetry

yet still Yet=nevertheless, still=yet (adverb of time)

remains To conquer, i.e. remains to be conquered This idiom is a relic of an older use of the infinitive (comp 'a horse to sell'), in which the word *to* has its full force as a preposition='much remains to the conquering'

10 *her* is emphatic

11 *new foes* These are not the "new forcers of conscience" of *Son xiii*, but still newer foes, viz., those Independents who were not in favour of full spiritual independence

12 *secular chains*, i.e. the bonds of a State Church Milton was in favour of absolute separation of Church and State 'Secular' (Lat. *seculum*, an age or generation), that which belongs to the present age, as opposed to that which concerns a future life, hence the words 'secular' and 'sacred' have come to be opposed to each other, like 'temporal' and 'spiritual'

13 *Help* this is the only imperative in the sonnet, it begins the special appeal for which the poem was written

14 *hiring wolves* comp *Lyc* 114 The word 'hiring' expresses Milton's contempt for all who served the Church for payment, "whose Gospel is their maw"

whose Gospel, etc., i.e. whose sole object is to obtain worldly benefits for themselves 'Gospel'=God spell, the story of God it is sometimes used as a general term for any religious

system, and, still more widely, for any rule of life, *e.g.* we say that one man's *gospel* is to become rich, another's to become famous, and so on. It is aptly used in this sense by Milton, and at the same time suggests that Gospel which the clergy *ought* to have adopted.

'Maw' = stomach, used figuratively for appetite or desire  
comp *Lyc* 119

### SONNET XVII.

This sonnet, written 1652, has the same immediate aim as the preceding one. It is addressed to Sir Henry Vane (1612-1662), who was then forty years of age. He is called 'the younger' because his father was then alive. He entered the Long Parliament as M.P. for Hull at the age of 27, having previously distinguished himself as Governor of Massachusetts in America. At the date of the sonnet he was a member of the Council of State. He was beheaded in 1662 on account of his republican sympathies. As an Independent he had taken keen interest in the questions of State and Church, and was of an enthusiastic and somewhat fanatical disposition. Attempts have recently been made to exalt his ability as a politician, but with dubious success. "Clever and attractive, a good speaker, and industrious and able in transacting business, he never became a wise politician, he was conceited and impetuous, and just as in religion he was given to mysticism and extravagant vagaries, so in politics he was a theorist and a dreamer who ruled his conduct by abstract considerations without recognising his own position or the needs of his times" (*Saturday Review*, Dec 1888). It is the more necessary, therefore, to bear in mind that Milton in this sonnet refers chiefly to the fact that Vane had, in Massachusetts, had occasion to consider the relations of Church and State.

1 With this line compare the common expression, 'an old head on young shoulders'

2 Than whom, etc. 'Than' here looks like a preposition governing 'whom' but *than* is a conjunction, and if followed by a noun or pronoun some word or words must be supplied before deciding whether the noun or pronoun is in the correct case, *e.g.* "I admire you more than *he*" = more than *he* admires you, "I admire you more than *him*" = more than *I* admire *him*. In the case of the relative *whom* it is difficult to supply the ellipsis: this is seen if a personal pronoun in the same case be substituted for it, *e.g.* "a better senator than *him*," which would be wrong. The use of *whom* after *than* is a curious anomaly.

3 helm of Rome. By a common metaphor taken from the

steering of a ship we speak of the 'helm of a state,' i.e. its government. The highest council in Rome was the Senate

gowns, not arms, senatorial wisdom, not generalship: comp *L'Alleg* 123 "Milton means, what is certainly true, that the fighting power of Rome could not have coped with these invaders had it not been directed by the administrative ability of the Senate" (Pattison)

4 The fierce Epirot African bold Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and Hannibal, the great Carthaginian general. Pyrrhus, one of the greatest generals of antiquity, invaded Italy in 280 B.C. in his first campaign he gained a victory at Heraclea, but with such loss that he sent his minister Cineas to Rome with proposals of peace. These were rejected by the Senate and Cineas, on his return, spoke of the Senate as an assembly of Kings. The war continued till 278.

Hannibal was compelled by his father to swear eternal enmity to Rome. He fought against Rome from B.C. 219 till his death thirty seven years later.

5 Whether to settle peace, etc. these imitative clauses are explanatory of 'sage counsel,' l. 1. 'Settle peace' = arrange terms of peace, 'unfold the drift of hollow states' = lay bare the real intentions of untrustworthy foreign governments. 'Drift' = aim or meaning, literally 'that which is driven', in colloquial English we say, 'What are you *driving* at?' = 'What is your meaning?'

6 hard to be spelled, not easily understood. Milton here compliments Vane as a skilful diplomatist. Comp *Il Pens* 170.

7 upheld participle qualifying 'war' 'war' is nominative to 'may move.' Comp note on Son xiii 14.

8 two main nerves, i.e. the two chief requisites for carrying on a successful war, viz., arms and wealth. The idea is a common one, occurring in Greek and Latin writers, and being still current in the phrase "sinews of war" (Greek *neuron*, a sinew). Cicero speaks of money as *nei vi belli*, and Tacitus has the words "No peace without war, no war without money."

9 equipage, necessary materials what Shakespeare calls "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."

10 spiritual power and civil. The meaning is 'Thou hast learned (as few have done) what the true nature of civil and ecclesiastical rule is, how they differ from each other, and what their relations ought to be.' For 'civil,' see note, *Il Pens* 122.

11 which few have done the antecedent to the relative is the whole object of the verb 'hast learned,' viz., 'to know both each.' The phrase corresponds to an explanatory clause in Latin introduced by *quod*.

12 bounds of either sword, i.e. the limits of the power of the Church (=the sword spiritual), and of the State (the sword temporal) Some would identify these with the "two handed engine," *Lyc* 130

13 Religion is said to look to Vane for support as a mother does to her eldest son

### SONNET XVIII

This sonnet, written in 1655, refers to a massacre in April of that year of the inhabitants of certain Piedmontese valleys in North Italy. These people (Vaudois or Waldenses) had, in their poverty and seclusion, preserved a simplicity of worship resembling that of the early days of Christianity, but in January, 1655, they were ordered by the Turin government to conform to the Catholic religion. Those who refused were to leave the country within three days under pain of death. Remonstrances were vain, a massacre was ordered, and for many days the Waldenses were exposed to the most frightful atrocities. When the news reached England the indignation reached a white heat, and Cromwell sent letters (written in Latin by Milton) and an ambassador to the offending Duke of Savoy demanding the withdrawal of the cruel edict, a Fast Day was appointed, and the sum of £40,000 was subscribed for the relief of the sufferers. The result was that they were allowed to return in peace to their valleys and to worship in their own way.

3 Even them who kept thy truth see note above 'Kept so pure' = preserved so free from the ritual that had crept into the Roman Catholic Church. 'Them' is the object of 'forget not'

4 worshiped stocks Milton considered Roman Catholicism to be idolatrous. 'Worshuped,' also spelt *worshipt*. Now that the participles of such words are almost exclusively formed by *ed* the final consonant is doubled, thus, *worshipped*. This indicates the nature of the vowel sound, compare the sound of 'hoped' and 'hopped,' 'striped' and 'stripped'

5 in thy book, etc. Here again we have biblical phraseology comp. *Psalms* xvi 8, "My tears, are they not in thy book?"

their groans Who, i.e. the groans of them who see note, *L'Alleg* 124

7 Slain, who were slain

rolled Mother with infant, etc. Such an incident actually took place. "A mother was hurled down a mighty rock with a little infant in her arms, and three days after was found dead with the child alive, but fast clasped between the arms of the



mother, which were cold and stiff, inasmuch that those that found them had much ado to get the child out'

9 'The valleys redoubled (=re-echoed) their cries to the hills, and the hills in turn redoubled them to heaven.'

10 martyred blood and ashes sow, an allusion to Tertullian's saying, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church" Milton prays that this massacre may be the means of spreading Protestantism wherever Roman Catholicism prevails

11 doth sway, governs, holds sway

12 The triple Tyrant, the Pope in allusion to the triple crown (*tricornis* / *ser*) or tiara worn by him as head of the Roman Catholic Church. Comp Fletcher's words in *Locusts*—

"Three mitred crowns the proud impostor wears,  
For he in earth, in hell, in heaven will reign."

that from these, etc., in order that from the blood and ashes of the Waldenses the number of Protestants may increase a hundredfold 'Hundredfold' is here treated as a plural antecedent of 'who'

13 thy way, God's way, the true religion.

14 fly, flee from, avoid For this use of 'fly' comp. *Sams Agon* 1541.

the Babylonian woe, Papacy see *Per* xvii and xviii. The Puritans considered the Church of Rome to be the Babylon there mentioned.

### SONNET XIX

This sonnet, probably written in 1655 is one of Milton's first references in poetry to that blindness which had gradually crept upon him since 1644 and had in 1652 blotted out his sight for ever. He continued in spite of his affliction, to act as Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State during Cromwell's protectorate the references in this sonnet to his enforced 'waiting' are to the poetical work for which he considered himself set apart

1 spent, exhausted.

2 Ere half my days, *sc.* 'are spent' His blindness was total when he was 44 years old. he died in 1674

dark world and wide These are touching words in the mouth of a blind man

3 that one talent The full construction is 'and (when I consider how) that one talent, which (it) is death to hide, (is) lodged with me useless' Talent (Lat *talentum*, a balance) =

something weighed in a balance, hence applied to 'money' and metaphorically (as in the Scripture parable of the talents) to 'God's gift' the word has thus acquired the sense of 'a natural gift or ability,' and there is even an adjective from it—'talented' = clever, possessing natural ability. Milton modestly compares himself to the servant who had received only one talent (see *Matt* xxv)

which is death to hide, i.e. to hide which is death. To leave one's powers unemployed is equivalent to mental and spiritual death

4 more bent, sc. 'is' 'bent,' determined

6 lest He returning chide, i.e. lest He, on his return, reprove me for sloth. This use of the present participle, instead of an adverbial clause, is a Latinism. see note, *Son* xiii 14. In the parable mentioned above, we read "After a long time the lord of these servants cometh and maketh a reckoning with them"

7 Doth God exact day-labour. The allusion is to *St John*, ix 4 "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work"

light denied absolute construction, equivalent (as often in Latin) to a conditional clause, = if light is denied

8 I fondly ask 'Fondly' = foolishly. see *Il Pens* 6, note. This is the principal clause on which the preceding seven lines depend. the whole passage well illustrates the involved nature of Milton's syntax. It may be analysed thus—

A Principal clause I fondly ask, etc

Under { 1 Doth God denied (subst. clause)

A { 2 When I consider chide (adv. clause)

Under { (1) How my light is spent (subst. clause)

2 { (2) (How) that one talent useless (subst. clause)

Under (1) a Ere half wide (adv. clause)

Under (2) { b Which is death to hide (adj. clause)

c Though my soul account (adv. clause)

Under c (a) Lest chide (adv. clause)

10 his own gifts, i.e. the talents entrusted by Him to man

Who for construction, see note, *Son* xii 12

12 thousands, i.e. thousands of angels. 'Angel' is literally 'messenger'. See *Par. Lost*, iv 677

13 post, hasten. Primarily *post* = something fixed, then a fixed place or stage on a line of road, then a person who travels from stage to stage, and finally any quick traveller.

14 stand and wait, i.e. 'those who, unable to do more, calmly submit to God's purposes, also render Him genuine service'

## SONNET XX

This sonnet, written in 1655 or 1656, proves that even in his blindness Milton could be *L'Allegro* as well as *Il Penseroso*. It is addressed to a son of that Henry Lawrence who was President of Cromwell's Council (1654) and a member of his House of Lords (1657). We do not know which of his sons is meant, but it was probably Henry, then about twenty-two years of age. He was one of a number of young men who, admiring Milton's genius, delighted to visit him, to talk with him, read to him, walk with him, or write for him.

1 of virtuous father virtuous son comp Horac—

"O matie pulchra, fili pulchrior"

2 Now that the fields, etc now, when the fields, etc The use of 'that' for 'when' was once extremely common, but its use is now rare except after the adverb 'now' (Abbott, § 284)

ways are mire The use of the noun 'mire' instead of the adjective 'muddy' is significant of the state of the London streets in rainy weather

3 Where shall we sometimes meet? a question which implies that, as they can neither walk into the country nor in the streets, they must meet indoors

4 Help waste, i.e. help each other to spend see note, line

13 Compare Horac, "*inorantem sacpe diem mero fisci*", also Milton's *Epitaphium Damonis*, 15

what may be won, etc 'thus gaining from the inclement season whatever good may be got by meeting together', the pleasures indoors will compensate for the loss of our walks out-of-doors

6 Favonius a frequent name in Latin poetry for Zephyr, the West Wind (see *L'Alleg* 19), it was this wind that introduced the spring, 'melting stern winter,' as Horace says. In one of his masques Jonson calls Favonius "father of the spring"

reinspire here used literally, 'to breathe new life into'

8 neither sowed nor spun an allusion to *Hall* vi 28, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" 'Spun' is here a past tense, see note, *Lyc* 102

9 neat This is from Lat *nitidus*, bright, attractive.

light and choice, temperate and well chosen

10 Of Attic taste, 'such as would please the simple and refined

Athenian taste' There may also be a kind of allusion to the fact that their food would be seasoned with 'Attic salt,' a common term for sparkling wit—for what are called in *L'Allegro* "quips and cranks"

11 artful, showing art or skill This is its radical sense, it is now used in a less dignified sense, viz, wily or cunning A similar change of meaning is seen in *artless*, *cunning*, etc See note, *L'Alleg* 141

12 Warble infinitive after 'hear'

immortal notes comp *L'Alleg* 137

Tuscan, Italian Tuscany being a compartment of Italy

13 spare To interpose, etc, i.e. 'use them sparingly' The Lat *parcere* with an infinitive = 'to refrain from', and the Latin verb *temperare* may mean either 'to refrain from' or 'to spare' There is therefore no doubt of Milton's meaning

14 not unwise, very wise By a figure of speech the two negatives strengthen the affirmative sense comp 'no mean applause' *Son* xxi 2

## SONNET XXI

This sonnet was written about the same time as the preceding one, and in a similar mood of cheerfulness Milton wishes, in Cyriac Skinner's company, to throw off for a time the cares and worries of his Secretaryship and calls upon his friend to lay aside his study of politics and of mathematical and physical science Cyriac Skinner was grandson of Sir Edward Coke, the famous lawyer and judge (1549-1634), and author of numerous legal works of great value

1 bench Of British Themis Coke was Solicitor-General in 1592 and afterwards Attorney General 'Bench,' a long seat, hence a judge's seat, and so used metaphorically for Law and Justice Themis, "the personification of the order of things established by law, custom, and equity"

2 no mean applause see note, *Son* xx 14, above

3 Pronounced *Pronuntiatio* is a Latin term for the decision of a judge, and we speak of a judge *pronouncing* sentence Comp *Lyc* 83

in his volumes, e.g. *The Institutes of the Laws of England, Reports*, in 13 vols, and *Commentaries on Lyttleton*

4 at their bar, i.e. in administering the law 'bar' is used metaphorically for 'a legal tribunal'

wrench, pervert, twist *W'rench* and *wrong* are both allied to *wring*, so that *wrong* means strictly 'twisted,' just as *right* means 'straight'

5 'To day resolve with me to drench deep thoughts in such mirth as will not afterwards bring regret' 'To drench deep thoughts' may be compared with such phrases as 'to drown care.'

6 after, afterwards

7 Let Euclid rest, etc lay aside the study of mathematics, physical science, and political questions Skinner was a diligent student of all these subjects Euclid, the celebrated mathematician, is here by metonymy put for his works the name has almost become synonymous with Geometry

Archimedes (B C 287 212), a mathematician and physicist of the highest order, lived at Syracuse when that city was taken, he was killed while intent upon a mathematical problem He wrote on cone sections, hydrostatics, etc

8 what the Swede intend, *sc* 'let rest' The verb being plural 'Swede' must here be plural, just as we say 'the Swiss,' 'the French,' 'the Dutch,' etc, to denote a whole nation 'Swede,' however, is not now so used, the adjective being 'Swedish' and the noun (singular only) 'Swede,' hence some editions read *resounds* When this sonnet was written, Charles X of Sweden was at war with Poland and Russia, and Louis XIV of France with Spain

9 To measure life, etc, *sc* learn in good time how short life is, so that you may make the most of it As Milton says in *Par Lost*, "What thou liv'st Live well, how long or short permit to Heaven" 'Betimes' (by time) = in good time the final *s* is the adverbial suffix

11 For other things, etc, *sc* Heaven has tenderly ordained that there shall be a time for mirth as well as anxious thought, and disapproves of the conduct of those who make a display of their anxiety and refuse to rejoice even when they may well do so Comp "Learn to jest in good time there's a time for all things," *Com of errors*, ii 2, also "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow for the morrow will be anxious for itself sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," *Matt* xi 34

## SONNET XXII

This sonnet, omitted from the edition of 1673 owing to the reference in the closing lines, was written on the third anniversary

of the day on which Milton's blindness became total it must therefore have been composed in 1655

1 this three years' day in prose we say, 'this day three years,' 'three years this day,' or 'three years ago to day,' all adverbial phrases 'Three years' has the force of an adjective qualifying 'day' Comp "I saw not better sport these seven years' day," Shakespeare, 2 *Henry VI* ii.

though clear To outward view, i.e. though apparently uninjured Some of Milton's enemies taunted him with his 'lack-lustre eye,' but he was able to say that his blindness had not altered the appearance of his face, though (he admits) 'in spite of myself, I am a deceiver'

3 Bereft, deprived *Be* is an intensive prefix, and *reare* is from the same A.S. word as *rob* see *Lyc* 107.

their seeing have forgot, i.e. have forgotten (= lost) their power of vision For 'forgot' see note, *Son* xi 1

4 their idle orbs, useless eyeballs 'Orb' is here correctly used to denote the ball of the eye (Lat. *orbis*) compare Virgil's *Aen* xii, *oculorum orbis*, also *Sams Agon* 591, "those dark orbs no more shall treat the light"

5 Of sun or moon, etc The word *or* is here used four times, 'either' being understood before 'of' *Or* is a corruption of *either*, not of *other*, and means 'any one of two', but it is often used where there are more than two objects noted.

7 bate a jot of, diminish in the least degree 'Bate' is a contraction of 'abate.'

9 What supports me? Milton's answer is, 'I am supported in my affliction by the thought that I lost my sight through over-exertion in the noble task of defending liberty' 'Conscience' = consciousness or knowledge the word is not now used in this general sense, and is so used only twice by Milton (see *Par Lost*, viii 502) It has still this meaning in French, but in English it is restricted to 'knowledge of right and wrong'

10 them, i.e. my eyes

overplied, overworked 'Ply' is from Lat. *plico*, to fold or mould, and as in moulding clay the fingers must be kept steadily at work, 'ply' has come to signify constant and steady effort, *e.g.* to *ply* a task.

11 In Liberty's defence The poet refers to his great pamphlet *Defensio Pro Populo Anglicano*, published in 1651, in reply to one by Salmasius, who condemned the execution of Charles I The writing of this Defence and its sequel hastened Milton's blindness.

12 talks So Milton very modestly wrote, but most editions have 'rings,' on the suggestion of an editor in 1694 (comp *Son* xv 1) The compliment implied in the change is none too great, and therefore deserves to be noticed, though not incorporated in the text

13 world's vain mask. It is common in poetry to liken the world and life to a play comp Shakespeare, "A stage where every man must play his part"

14 had I, etc, i e if I had no better guide

### SONNET XXIII.

This was his second wife, Catherine Woodcock, who died in childbirth in February, 1657, fifteen months after her marriage. She had been a good and faithful wife to him This sonnet was probably written in 1658

1 Methought see note, *Son* x 11 Milton speaks as if he were recalling a dream

espoused, married from *Fr espouer*, to marry (*Lat sponsus*, promised) Strictly it may be applied either to husband or wife, though now generally used of the latter alone

2 Alcestis, wife of Admetus, king of Phærae in Thessaly on the day of his marriage with Alcestis, Admetus neglected to offer a sacrifice to Artemis, but Apollo reconciled the goddess to him, and induced the Fates to grant him deliverance from death if his father, mother or wife would die for him His wife died in his stead, but was brought from the lower world by Hercules, "Jove's great son"

4 Rescued participial idiom, comp *Son* xiii 14

5 Mine pronoun, subject to 'came,' 1 9

as whom, i e as or like (those) whom, etc The antecedent of the relative is not expressed

6 Purification By the Old Law is meant the Mosaic law, which enjoined certain ceremonies of purification upon mothers after child-birth See *Leviticus* xii

7 And such as yet, etc, i e and such as I trust yet, etc

8 without restraint This is an allusion to the legal restrictions upon women under the Old Law noted above

9 all in white, as if denoting that ceremonial uncleanness ended with death for the force of *all* see note, *Il Pens* 33

10 Her face was veiled This may signify that Milton had never actually seen his wife, and could not therefore picture her face in his dreams

my fancied sight, i.e. the eye of my fancy = my imagination

11 shined, shone In early English *shone* is a strong verb, *shinen* being the past participle and *shone* the past tense But as early as the fourteenth century *shined* occurs as a past tense

12 There seem to be two comparisons involved in this line 'love, etc., shone more clearly in her face than they have ever done in any other'; and 'love, etc., shone with more delight in her face than in any other'

13 as, while, introduces a temporal clause

inclined, bent over me

14. day brought back my night, i.e. daybreak recalled me to the knowledge of my blindness (and loneliness) This verbal contradiction between 'day' and 'night' is very striking



## INDEX TO THE NOTES

[REFERENCES —M M = *Song on May Morning* Sh. = *On Shal es-  
scape* U = *On the University Carrier*. E = *Epitaph on the  
Marchioness of Winchester* T = *On Time* A = *L'Allegro* ·  
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